

TRADE UNIONISM AND SECTARIANISM AMONG DERRY SHIRT WORKERS 1920-1968
With Special Reference to the National Union of Tailors and Garment
Workers

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Faculty of Science, University of London.

by
Andrew Robert Finlay

Department of Anthropology
University College London
1989



ABSTRACT

The problem at the heart of this study is: to what extent and in what ways was the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry influenced by sectarianism? This problem and my approach to it were elaborated in contradistinction to existing theories of trade unionism in Northern Ireland. According to the main theory, developed most cogently within traditional Irish marxism, trade unionism was thwarted by sectarianism. I suggest that this theory has more to do with the reductionist and evolutionist assumptions of its authors than with social reality and argue that the relationship between trade unionism and sectarianism is better understood with an approach in which it is recognised that both of these institutions are constituted through the actions of concrete individuals who are themselves constituted by society, and in which priority is given to the meanings which individuals ascribe to their actions and predicaments. My study is based on interviews with a sample of retired union officials and activists.

My respondents were keenly aware of the Catholic-Protestant dichotomy, but, contrary to what traditional Irish marxists would lead one to expect, they did not regard sectarianism as a significant problem until the 1950s. My analysis of union growth and structure 1920-1952 largely confirmed this view: union densities compared favourably with clothing workers in Britain, and the main factors underlying fluctuations in membership were more or less the same as elsewhere in Britain. Conflict between Protestant and Catholic shirtmakers only became a problem as a result of inter-union rivalry which followed the formation of a breakaway union in 1952. Sectarian conflict was activated by a specifically trade union power struggle, not vice versa. Thus, this study does not merely contradict the prevailing view of the relationship between trade unionism and sectarianism - it inverts it.

CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	1
ABSTRACT	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF TABLES AND MAPS	6
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
 CHAPTER 1: TRADE UNIONISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND: A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	9
1.2 Trade Unionism and Marxism in Northern Ireland: the Problem of Sectarianism	11
1.3 An Alternative Approach	25
1.4 The Dialectics of Field Research	31
1.5 Methodological Issues	38
1.6 Conclusion	49
 CHAPTER 2: DERRY, LONDONDERY, AND ITS SHIRT INDUSTRY 1920-1968	
2.1 Introduction	52
2.2 Doire, Derry, Londonderry	53
2.3 The Origins of the Shirt Industry in Derry	69
2.4 The Religious and Political Composition of the Shirt Industry	78
2.5 Conclusion	85
 CHAPTER 3: THE EARLY HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM AND THE STRIKE OF 1920	
3.1 Introduction	87
3.2 Trade Unionism in the Derry Shirt Industry 1889-1919	90
3.3 The Derry Shirt Cutters' Strike	99

3.4 The Aftermath of the Strike: the Fragmentation of the ASTT and the UGW	117
3.5 Conclusion	128
 CHAPTER 4: THE DECLINE AND GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONISM AMONG WOMEN SHIRTMAKERS 1920-1952	
4.1 Introduction	131
4.2 Fluctuations in Membership: the Institutional Context	141
4.3 Trade Unionism, Female Shirtmakers, and the Family in Derry	161
4.4 Trade Unionism and Sectarianism in the 1930s and 1940s	173
4.5 Conclusion	189
 CHAPTER 5: MALE SHIRT CUTTERS AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NUTGW AND THE ATGWU: THE POLITICS OF SKILL, SEX AND RELIGION	
5.1 Introduction	192
5.2 The ATGWU and the NUTGW: a Sectarian Division?	195
5.3 Sex and Skill in the Derry Shirt Industry	206
5.4 Trade Unionism and the Politics of Skill	218
5.5 Conclusion	224
 CHAPTER 6: THE SECESSION OF THE DERRY BRANCH OF THE NUTGW 1952-1954: TRADITIONAL IRISH MARXISM STOOD ON ITS HEAD	
6.1 Introduction	227
6.2 The Origins of the Breakaway: Personal Differences and Intra-Union Conflict	232
6.3 The Rank and File and the Breakaway	238
6.4 The Reconstitution of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW	249
6.5 Inter-Union Relations and Sectarianism	257
6.6 Conclusion	264
 CHAPTER 7: RIVALRY AND ACCOMMODATION: TRADE UNIONISM IN THE DERRY SHIRT INDUSTRY 1954-1968	
7.1 Introduction	267
7.2 Intra-Union Conflict and Accommodation	267
7.3 Inter-Union Rivalry and the Changing Pattern of Union Organisation in the 1950s and 1960s	278

7.4 Inter-Union Accommodation	289
7.5 Conclusion	298
 CHAPTER 8: TRADE UNIONISM AND SECTARIANISM IN THE DERRY SHIRT INDUSTRY 1920-1968: AN HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONCLUSION	
8.1 Introduction	301
8.2 Trade Unionism, Socialist Politics, and the Civil Rights Movement: the End of an Era	303
8.3 Trade Unionism and Sectarianism in the Derry Shirt Industry: a Conclusion	318
 APPENDIX 1: ORAL SOURCES	331
 APPENDIX 2: TABLES	352
 NOTES	358
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	377
 MAP: THE DISTRIBUTION OF SHIRT FACTORIES IN DERRY, 1954	389

LIST OF TABLES AND MAPS

TABLES:

1. The Main Shirt Manufacturers in Derry and Numbers Employed c1896 (factory workers and outworkers). 352
2. Signatories to the Londonderry Shirt Manufacturers' Federation Statement to the Boundary Commission 1925. 353
3. The Religious Affiliations of Male Shirt Workers Resident in the City (County Borough) of Derry 1901 and 1911. 354
4. The Religious Affiliations of Female Shirtmakers and Seamstresses Resident in the City (County Borough) of Derry 1901 and 1911. 354
5. Numbers of Members in the 'Londonderry' and the 'Londonderry (Factory Workers)' Branches of the ASTT 1914-1919. 355
6. Numbers of Members in the 'Londonderry' and the 'Londonderry (Factory Workers)' Branches of the ASTT 1920-1931. 356
7. Estimated Numbers Employed and Numbers of NUTGW Members in the Various Centres of Shirt and Pyjama Manufacture in Northern Ireland in March 1948. 357
8. Numbers of NUTGW Members in Derry Shirt Factories in Each Quarter of the Year 1970. 357

MAP:

- The Distribution of Shirt Factories in Derry, 1954 389

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

Newspapers and Union Journals

AP/RN	<u>An Phoblacht/Republican News</u>
DJ	<u>The Derry Journal</u>
DS	<u>The Derry Standard</u>
GW	<u>The Garment Worker</u>
LS	<u>The Londonderry Sentinel</u>

Organisations

ASTT	Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses
ATGWU	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union
CIU	Congress of Irish Unions
CPI	Communist Party of Ireland
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
CWU	Clothing Workers' Union
DCAC	Derry Citizens Action Committee
DLP	Derry Labour Party
FEA	Fair Employment Agency
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ILHS	Irish Labour History Society
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IrLP	Irish Labour Party
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
ITUC	Irish Trade Union Congress
LDLP	Londonderry Labour Party
NAUL	National Amalgamated Union of Labour
NFWW	National Federation of Women Workers
NIC-ICTU	Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NILP	Northern Ireland Labour Party
NUDL	National Union of Dock Labourers
NUTGW	National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers
PD	Peoples Democracy
PRONI	Public Records Office, Northern Ireland
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SMF	Londonderry Shirt Manufacturers' Federation
TUC	British Trade Union Congress
UGW	United Garment Workers' Union.
UIL	United Irish League
UULA	Ulster Unionist Labour Association
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
WUI	Workers' Union of Ireland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is based on interviews with a sample of retired trade union officials and activists which were mainly carried out during one year of fieldwork in Derry. This fieldwork was made possible by grants from the Thomas Witherton-Batt Trust Fund (University College London) and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland; I am grateful for both. My main debt, however, is to the people who welcomed me into their homes and put up with my questions: as will become apparent their answers to those questions had a profound affect on my views of trade unionism, Northern Ireland, and much more besides. I also want to thank those people who work for the NUTGW, ITGWU, and ATGWU in Derry, Belfast, Dublin, and London who helped me to trace retired members of their respective organisations and who facilitated my research in many other ways.

I doubt whether one can be taught how to do anthropological field research: it seems to me to be something which, in large measure, must be learnt through experience. It is a difficult, but ultimately rewarding, experience, and I want to thank my supervisors - Rosemary Harris and John Gledhill - for encouraging me to embark on it, coaxing me through it, and, having completed it, helping me to turn it into a thesis. A grant from the the Radcliffe-Brown Memorial Fund for Social Anthropological Research was of considerable help during the final preparation of the typescript.

I also want to thank a number of friends and colleagues: Lorry Leader, Oonagh O'Brien, Dick Hunter, and especially Valerie McConnell; the staff of Magee University College, Derry - particularly Eddie McWilliams; the staff of the Central Library, Belfast; my fellow members of the Irish Labour History Society in Belfast and Dublin - particularly Terry Cradden, Peter Collins, Bob Purdie, Theresa Moriarty, and Sarah Ward-Perkins.

I owe a special debt to Lindsay, and, above all others, to my family - Roy, Vera, and Margaret.

CHAPTER 1: TRADE UNIONISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND: A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Introduction

This study does not fit easily into the literature on British trade unionism. The pioneers of research on British trade unionism were the Webbs (1897 and 1902). Turner, writing in 1962, described the literature in the following way:

Since the Webbs, nobody has attempted (or at least, succeeded in) an emulation of their classic study of trade unionism's history and character at large. But particular aspects of trade unionism as a broad institution - strikes, wages, internal government, and so on - have been taken up by specialists of various kinds. Then, particular unions have been separated as objects of description or enquiry - a line especially developed by labour historians... A more recently developed interest concerns the smaller group of workers, in a particular workplace for instance, from whom it is hoped to establish some general conclusion. (1962: 13).

Following the publication of Dunlop's Industrial Relations Systems (1958), academic interest shifted away from trade unions, as such, towards the system of rules which governed relations between employees, employers, and government agencies (cf Hyman 1979a: 10-16; Poole, 1984: 45 and 187-188; and Watson, 1988: 6). My study is not concerned with the history of a single union, or with one aspect of trade unionism as an institution; nor does it focus on relations between employees and employers. Rather, it is concerned with trade unionism in a particular industry in a particular city during a particular period; as such, it involves consideration of the various organisations which had members in this industry, and touches on various aspects of their development including their growth, their internal government, and their structure.

If my study is, in this sense, unconventional it is because the problem with which I am concerned and the theoretical approach which I have adopted are quite different to those which have preoccupied

scholars of British trade unionism and industrial relations. The problem is to do with the effect of sectarianism on the development of trade unionism. My theoretical approach is along the lines developed by Abrams (1982: ix) in his discussion of 'the problematic of structuring': the attempt to understand social processes in terms of the action of concrete individuals who are conceived of as simultaneously constituting, and being constituted by, society and history. The raw material upon which my analysis is based is derived from in-depth interviews with a sample of trade union officials and activists and from extant documentary sources. From a social anthropological perspective my study can be regarded as a part of what Ortner (1984: 159) has described as the discipline's 'rapprochement with history,' but it initially emerged as a critique of the literature on trade unionism in Northern Ireland, and it is as an anthropological contribution to an ongoing debate about the nature of sectarianism and trade unionism in Northern Ireland that my study derives much of its general interest.

Some general interest also accrues to my study because of the particular group of organisations which are its subject. These are the trade unions which organised in the Derry shirt industry between 1920 and 1968. They are of general interest for two reasons. First, because Derry is an important city and the shirt industry was its staple industry. But it is not simply as a city - not even as Northern Ireland's second city - that Derry is important, indeed it is more a provincial town than city. Rather, Derry's importance belongs to the realm of political symbolism: it was the place where a number of key events in the history of Ireland took place. Secondly, as will become apparent, much of the literature on trade unionism in Northern Ireland is actually concerned with trade unionism in Belfast, and my research may be seen as an attempt to redress the balance. These aspects of my project will be pursued in the next chapter; in this one I will deal with theoretical and methodological concerns. In section 1.2 I will review the literature on trade unionism in Northern Ireland and define my area of study. In section 1.3 I will pursue my critique of the literature and develop my theoretical approach to the issues discussed in section 1.2. In section 1.4 I will discuss how my project as a whole developed in the

course of my field research and in relation to my training as a social anthropologist. In section 1.5 I will describe my research procedure and demonstrate its validity in relation to my area of study and my theoretical approach.

1.2 Trade Unionism and Marxism in Northern Ireland: The Problem of Sectarianism

Trade unionism in Northern Ireland has been the subject of much comment and debate but little sustained study. In this section I will explore the reasons for this paradox, and attempt to bring the subject into sharper relief.

The predominant view of trade unionism in Northern Ireland is that it has failed, or been rendered less effective than trade union movements in other places, because of the prevalence of sectarian divisions among the working class. This view is held by many scholars, but has been most developed by those writing from a marxist perspective (examples of non-marxist versions of this thesis include Moody, 1954: 127; Messenger, 1981: 207; and Dohr, 1952: 146). One of the most influential contemporary exponents of the marxist analysis is Michael Farrell (1980). Referring to Belfast in the period 1880-1914 he writes (1980: 16-17):

The Ulster Unionists... secured the allegiance of the Protestant workers by a systematic policy of discrimination against Catholics which left the Protestants with a virtual monopoly of the well paid skilled trades, especially in the shipbuilding and engineering industry... The Unionist bosses soon discovered that the policy of discrimination had an added advantage - it prevented any effective labour or trade union movement from developing in Belfast.

The emphasis on the shipyard workers is understandable: these were a large, well organised, strategic - Reid (1980: 121) describes them as the 'vanguard of the Protestant working class' - group of workers whose exclusivism towards Catholics is well known and sometimes took dramatic forms. For example, in the summer of 1920 several thousand Catholic workers - and some Protestant socialists - were driven from their jobs in the Belfast Shipyards by their loyalist colleagues. Farrell analyses this infamous episode as the result of a conspiracy

by Unionist'' politicians designed to stymie the class consciousness which had begun to develop in the shipyards during a strike in 1919 (1980: 27-28).

Farrell does not develop a systematic analysis of the Northern Irish trade union movement in the period after 1920 - if it was such an abject failure such an analysis is hardly worth the effort. However he makes it clear that he regards his analysis of Belfast in the period before the First World War to be valid for subsequent years and for the rest of Northern Ireland too. In his preface (1980: 11) he states:

Most confusion of all has arisen over the relations between Protestant and Catholic workers in Northern Ireland and the utter failure of the Labour movement there - even in so heavily industrialised a city as Belfast. This failure can only be understood against the background of religious discrimination in employment which divided the working class, giving the Protestants a small but real advantage, and creating a Protestant 'aristocracy of labour' particularly in the Belfast engineering industry.

And, in his conclusion (1980: 327) he mentions an instance in 1932 when Protestants and Catholics united to demand changes in state funded employment schemes (the outdoor relief system), but adds that, 'since then every attempt by political groups to unite and mobilise the working class on social and economic issues has foundered, because it came up against the question of discrimination and Protestant privilege.'

Farrell notwithstanding, there is ample evidence that trade unions did develop in Northern Ireland. In 1953 there were 92 trade unions with a combined membership of 200,000 in the province (Bleakley 1953: 158), and Rolston (1980: 70) notes,

contemporary membership figures suggest a strong NI trade union movement. Approximately 57% of workers are unionised (a rate slightly higher than Britain but lower than in the Republic [of Ireland]).

In what sense, then, does Farrell regard trade unionism in Northern Ireland to have been a failure? In fact he does not make his criterion explicit, but it can be inferred from the problematic within which his analysis is located. Farrell, both as an historian and as a political activist, is part of a tradition of Irish marxism

which traces its origins in the writings of James Connolly the renowned socialist republican politician and trade union organiser who was shot by the British after taking part in the 1916 rising in Dublin. For Connolly Belfast was a paradox: it was the most industrialised part of Ireland, and as such, according to his theoretical preconceptions, should be the place where class cleavages should be the most pronounced; in fact, he found that it was, 'the happy hunting ground of the slave driver and the home of the least rebellious slaves in the world' (Cork Workers Club, 1975: 38). In other words, Connolly was puzzled by the fact that Protestant workers tended to make common political cause with their Unionist bosses rather than with their Catholic colleagues. As Patterson (1980: ix; cf Reid, 1980: 113) has put it, Connolly solved his paradox

by analogy to developments in the world of trade unionism. The skilled worker, the member of a union, looked upon the unskilled and ununionised as a threat. Consequently, he was deaf to all appeals to the solidarity of Labour. The Protestant worker enjoyed a similarly privileged position with regard to his Catholic counterpart. This was the basis for the dominant conservative ideology and politics amongst Protestant workers.

Additionally, Connolly (1911) argued that Protestant workers were subject to ideological manipulation. The manipulators were the Unionist bourgeoisie; their instrument was the Orange Order, an explicitly anti-Catholic organisation. That Farrell shares Connolly's problematic is self evident. To be sure, Farrell puts most emphasis on the argument about Protestant privilege, and presents the Orange Order primarily as the agency of 'discrimination and patronage' (1980: 358), but he shares Connolly's view of the power of Orangeism as an ideology (eg 1980: 11). From the perspective of what might be called 'traditional Irish marxism' trade unionism and Unionism are viewed as incompatible or in mutual 'contradiction' (Workers' Research Unit, 1979: 14).

It now becomes possible to discern the criterion according to which Farrell judges the Northern Ireland trade union movement to have been a failure. The traditional Irish marxist problematic is based on a reductionist and evolutionist view of history according to which

the development of capitalist social relations necessarily replaces the diversity and fragmentation of pre-capitalist popular strata and strips away the veils of paternalism,

religion, and so on; that the development of the capitalist mode of production necessarily produces a social formation in which (at last!) economic interest determines political action and in which the massing of workers in towns and factories gives them a greater organizational power. (Reid, 1980: 113).

Thus it is assumed that in the normal circumstances of capitalist society, workers, sharing a common position as the propertyless class, will unite in opposition to the capitalist class as part of a process leading to socialist revolution. Trade unionism is conceived as an integral part of this process, and it is in this context that trade unionism in Northern Ireland is judged a failure. For, although trade unions have attracted a large membership throughout Northern Ireland, the working class, as Farrell and others have shown, has tended to support socially conservative Unionist or nationalist parties; socialism has only occasionally won significant working class support, and even then only in a reformist form.

During the late 1960s and 1970s evolutionist and reductionist assumptions of this kind were undermined by new interpretations of Marx's writings; the most notable of which was Althusser (1969 and 1971). Inspired by Althusser's writings, a number of marxist scholars began, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to develop a thorough-going theoretical and historical critique of the traditional Irish marxist perspective (see Gibbon, 1975; Bew, Gibbon and Patterson, 1979 and 1980; Patterson 1980 and 1982; and Reid 1980). This critique did not involve any sustained analysis of the trade union question; the main critics, Bew, Gibbon and Patterson were more interested in challenging the traditional Irish marxist view of Unionism and of the Protestant working class. However, their arguments are important in relation to this study firstly, because they have important implications for our view of the nature of working class division and sectarianism in Northern Ireland; secondly, because they suggest a different way of looking at trade unionism in Northern Ireland; and thirdly because they provoked a sophisticated defence of the traditional Irish marxist view of trade unionism in Northern Ireland as a failure (Rolston, 1980; and Munck 1987). Thus, before attempting to define the issues which will be addressed in this study it is necessary to examine the debate between traditional Irish marxists and their critics.

Bew et al (1979 and 1980), Patterson (1980 and 1982) call into question the two fundamental tenets of the traditional Irish marxist analysis of Unionism. They denounce the traditional argument that Protestant working class support for Unionism was based on Orange prejudice and the result ideological manipulation on the part of the ruling class as 'pre-marxist' and untenable (Bew et al, 1979: 6). They agree with Farrell that Protestants tended to monopolise skilled jobs in the Belfast shipbuilding and engineering complex, and that these workers dominated the local trade union movement in the years before World War One. Nevertheless, Farrell's attempt to explain Protestant working class politics in terms of discrimination in the allocation of jobs is rejected: they argue that the Protestant working class was not a homogeneously privileged stratum, and that many Protestants were unskilled (Bew et al, 1980: 157-158); Reid points out that it 'overlooks the "relative autonomy" of ideology and culture' (Reid, 1980: 114). Bew et al and Reid argue that Unionism should be conceived as an alliance of classes and class fractions constructed by the Unionist bourgeoisie in opposition to the Home Rule Bills mooted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, after 1920, by the Northern Ireland state. The material basis for this all-class alliance is said to have been the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland such that the north eastern part of the island around Belfast industrialised while the south remained primarily agricultural (cf The British and Irish Communist Organisation, 1972). Moreover, the ideology around which the alliance was originally mobilised was not Orangeism but

a specific representation of the structural division in Irish society... according [to which] the social and economic character of the north, and in particular its monopolisation of capitalist machine industry, was the the expression of two distinct racial and religious histories (Ireland - Two Nations). (Bew et al 1979:8).

Patterson (1982: 27) concedes that Unionist ideology had sectarian aspects, but argues that its main thrust was that

rule from Dublin would be economically and socially retrogressive and this was of particular importance in integrating the Protestant working class into the Unionist movement.

He concedes that sectarianism remained 'an element' in Protestant politics after partition, but argues that the 'militant anti-nationalism' of Protestant workers can best be explained in terms of

the continued 'divergence in economic and social structure north and south' (1982: 28). In other words, Unionism and sectarianism are not necessarily one and the same thing.

On the question of trade unionism, Patterson (1980) and Reid (1980) introduce a few new insights. Reid concedes that organised Protestant workers in Belfast's shipyards often revealed an exclusive attitude towards Catholics, but he suggests that this hostility may have originated less in sectarianism than in the routine trade union sectionalism of a group of workers who, because of the nature of the shipbuilding labour process, felt insecure (1980: 123). In this respect, the behaviour of Protestant trade unionists in Belfast's shipyards was not unlike that of their counterparts in Britain. Patterson developed this kind of analysis further in his study of the 'The Protestant Working Class and the Belfast Labour Movement 1868-1920' (1980). He does not regard trade unionism in Belfast to have been a failure. In a similar way to Reid, he argues that the exclusivism of organised skilled workers was rooted in the 'nature of certain types of trade unionism' (1980: xiv) rather than in sectarianism. Moreover, he suggests that the indifference of skilled trade unionists to the organisation of less skilled workers in Belfast's other major industry, linen spinning and weaving, had more to do with the fact that the former were men and the latter women than it had with the fact that most of the former were Protestants and many of the latter Catholics (1980: 31).

Rolston's first foray into the debate on the labour movement in Northern Ireland comes in the form of a chapter in a book which he co-authored with O'Dowd and Tomlinson (1980). It is one of several discrete case studies of how sectarianism has been reproduced in various spheres of Northern Irish life despite the implementation of reformist policies by the British state following the collapse of the Unionist regime in 1972. The authors attempt to incorporate some of the theoretical insights made by Bew, Gibbon, and Patterson and, at the same time, hold onto the main conclusions and tenets of the traditional Irish marxist analysis. This results in some contradictions. Thus, in the first chapter - the purpose of which 'is to provide an historical and theoretical context for the

subsequent case studies' (1980a: 3) - O'Dowd rejects the traditional Irish marxist view of discrimination as a policy, sectarianism as something existing only in the realm of ideas, and both 'as a tactic (operated by the Unionist bourgeoisie or the British state) to divide and rule the working class' (1980a: 23). Rather, he argues (1980a: 25-26) that sectarianism is one of the fundamental structural divisions in Northern Irish society:

The first step in combatting the deficiencies of the foregoing analyses is to confirm the importance of social divisions other than class in all historical capitalist societies. Sectarianism is not a superstructural phenomenon floating free of an abstracted economic base which in turn is divided into classes. In NI sectarian division is a material reality which has been constituted and re-constituted throughout the history of capital accumulation and class struggle in Ireland as a whole... Class relations in NI were only experienced as sectarian class relations. Sectarian division is itself only a particular historical division of class, or more precisely class fractions, cemented together in Protestant and Catholic class alliances. In other words sectarian division is a class phenomenon and vice versa... The division amounts to a near apartheid in many areas of social life... Segregated housing, schools, churches, recreational facilities and workplaces testify to the importance of the division which is at its sharpest [his emphasis] in urban working class areas.

This notwithstanding, Rolston evidently shares Farrell's evolutionist and reductionist view of trade unionism. For example, at the beginning of his chapter on trade unionism he criticises those (mainly trade union officials) who present the trade union movement as 'a veritable island of social democracy in a sectarian sea' (1980: 62):

if [this] is to be more than a mere grasping at straws, there must be evidence of a reality behind the image. Such evidence would at the very least need to reveal a history of the pursuit of class politics on the part of trade unions in NI, as well as a vibrant trade union movement at present. (1980: 69-71).

However, unlike Farrell, Rolston extends his analysis of trade unionism beyond 1920 and, in doing so, is confronted by the reality that although socialist or labour politics have only occasionally attracted significant support, trade unionism has grown and attracted members, Catholics as well as Protestants, in numbers that compare favourably with the rest of the United Kingdom (1980: 70). Having recognised this, and, no doubt, mindful of the criticisms made by Bew

et al (1979), Rolston develops a more subtle version of the traditional Irish marxist argument that trade unionism in Northern Ireland has been thwarted by sectarianism. His analysis is of particular importance not just because it is the most subtle and, perhaps, most influential contemporary re-working of the Connollyist argument, but also because, although comparatively short, it is the only systematic sociological analysis of the history of trade unionism in Northern Ireland from the nineteenth century to the present day⁽²⁾; it therefore demands further discussion.

Rolston begins his analysis of trade unionism by going over the well rehearsed period before the First World War. He entitles this section of his article 'The Development of Sectarian Trade Unionism' (1980: 71). His main argument is as follows:

sectarian division was part of the *normal* [his emphasis] operations of trade unionism in Ireland from the beginning. That is not to say that trade unionists in the 19th century were unceasingly sectarian in their attitudes and utterances; it is to emphasise that divisions in the working class were necessarily reconstituted in the movement that sought to organise that class. Consequently, developments which had one connotation in a non-sectarian setting took on a different meaning in a sectarian setting. Thus the sectionalism and exclusivity evident in the development of trade unions elsewhere became in the North of Ireland precisely a sectarian sectionalism and sectarian exclusivity. (1980: 71).

At the turn of the century the Belfast working class was,

divided into two fractions: on the one hand Protestant and more skilled, on the other Catholic and less skilled. Early trade union organisation reflected this division of unionised skilled Protestant workers from non-unionised Catholic workers. (1980: 72).

Rolston denies the significance of Patterson's and Reid's claim that this division and the exclusivism of the former towards the latter may have been rooted in a particular form of trade unionism:

objective division had subjective consequences. As Beatrice Webb commented after a visit to Belfast, the skilled workers were 'contemptuous and indifferent to the Catholic labourers and women who were earning miserable wages in the shipyards and linen factories of Belfast'... whether such contempt derived from the exclusivity of the skilled, from sectarian attitudes and/or from sexist attitudes hardly matters to those on the receiving end of it. (1980: 72).

Attitudes like these inhibited the organisation of unskilled and

female workers; it was not, as Farrell suggests, just employers who frustrated trade union activity by fomenting religious hatred:

Workers themselves, divided on the intertwined bases of religious affiliation and skill, were not easily united on the question of organising the predominantly Catholic unskilled... Those who sought to advance the cause of trade unionism were faced with a double bind of a divided clientele and an institutionally divided movement. (1980: 73).

The institutional division to which Rolston refers was that between British based and Irish based trade unions. After 1850 many local craft societies in Ireland amalgamated with the British based craft unions which were then beginning to expand vertically and horizontally (cf McCarthy, 1977: chapter one *passim*, and Hyman, 1979: 48). In the 1890s and 1900s organisers for British based general unions attempted to recruit previously unorganised unskilled workers in Ireland. The most successful of these was James Larkin, the Liverpool born Irish organiser of the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL). In December 1908 Larkin was suspended by the English general secretary of the NUDL, James Sexton, and the following month he established the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). From the outset the ITGWU was explicitly identified with Irish nationalism. The new union grew prodigiously in the south of Ireland during the War of Independence, and, after partition, it became the largest union in the Free State, but in Belfast dock workers split: Catholics joined the ITGWU and Protestants remained loyal to the NUDL.

As I have pointed out, Rolston acknowledges that despite these difficulties trade unionism grew and accommodated workers of different religious and political affiliations and different levels of skill as members of unions which were affiliated to a single all-Ireland trade union congress - the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC). However, he argues that it is precisely this accommodation which emasculated the movement:

The trade union movement could only exist on the basis of the least common denominator between divided workers. It is for this reason that a number of characteristics came to the fore in trade unionism in the North. The movement, in as far as it existed at all, could most successfully do so on the basis of a centralised rather than mass organisation... Furthermore, the central organisation had

to concern itself primarily with avoiding 'politics'. In other words, economism represented the limits of the movement to organise and agitate: wages and conditions were not necessarily seen as political issues... Given the sectarian division of labour in the North, unity was possible, for the most part, only at an institutional level. The institution thus became disproportionately important in Northern trade unionism. (1980: 73-74)

This institutional unity survived partition, but collapsed in 1945 when a number of Irish based unions, led by the ITGWU, left the ITUC because it was perceived to be dominated by British based unions. A separate Congress of Irish Unions (CIU) was established, but institutional unity was restored in 1959 when, after prolonged negotiations between the CIU and ITUC, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) was formed. However, Rolston argues that this was purely formal, institutional unity devoid of any real meaning: following the unification of the CIU and ITUC a Northern Ireland Committee (NIC-ICTU) was formed, and since then the ICTU has 'operated as two trade union movements, each working relatively independently of the other in each of the two states brought about by partition' (1980: 77).

Having established to his own satisfaction that 'in NI a trade union movement hardly exists outside this institutional level' (1980: 80), Rolston devotes the rest of his study to an analysis of the policies of the NIC-ICTU. From my point of view, the most interesting aspect of this analysis is the extent to which Rolston judges the NIC-ICTU according to the same kind of criteria as Farrell. He catalogues the NIC-ICTU's failure to confront discrimination and sectarianism in the workplace and in the wider society: 'issues on which labour movements in other societies might be expected to agitate' (1980: 81). However, the problem for trade union officials and activists is not merely that 'taking stances outside purely trade union issues would certainly drive away one or other section of the divided clientele' (1980: 73); it is that the NIC-ICTU has accommodated itself to Unionism and therefore, by Rolston's lights, to sectarianism. Rolston discusses three aspects of this accommodation. The first is that despite union officials' claims to be non-sectarian and apolitical:

economism is a political position, not just by default, but also because it requires a definition of the correct target against which trade union demands can be directed. In the

North the target was Britain. Many trade Unionists saw themselves, as a result of the Union [with Britain], as an integral part of the British trade union movement, struggling against British capitalists for better wages and conditions. (1980: 74).

The second is that the NIC-ICTU, first recognised by the Stormont regime in 1964, has been co-opted and become an integral part of a Unionist state. And third,

Given the centrality of Protestant workers to the economy, the issues relevant to them... are less tinged with opprobrium than those issues of relevance to many Catholic workers. Moreover the militancy of Loyalist workers is less easily combatted even if the will is there; they are more likely to have a point of production than Catholic workers, and at that point are more likely to be skilled workers. It is thus disingenuous of the NIC to argue that it is non-sectarian because it is equally against Loyalism and Republicanism. Integrated as it is into the state, it cannot be. (1980: 90).

Thus for Rolston, as for Farrell, the failure of trade unionism in Northern Ireland is its political emasculation.

To sum up. Trade unionism in Northern Ireland has been the subject of much contention. In the course of the debate sectarianism has been identified as the major issue. However, there have been, with the partial exception of Belfast in the period before 1920, remarkably few sustained analyses of the effect of divisions within the working class on trade unionism. The main problem is that the trade union question has been obscured by debates about the nature of socialism and of working class politics; this is due to the theoretical legacy of traditional Irish marxism. In the latter, trade unionism is conceptualised in terms of an evolutionary and reductionist schema in which the development of progressive socialist politics on the part of the working class is seen as being - in normal conditions - inevitable. Socialist politics have only rarely attracted significant support in Northern Ireland; therefore, trade unionism is judged a failure. The fact that trade unions succeeded in attracting many members, from both communities, is either not acknowledged (Farrell) or held to be irrelevant (Rolston). The traditional Irish marxist perspective leads to teleological forms of explanation in which serious, open-ended research is aborted in the search for evidence to confirm a pre-conceived end: the failure or emasculation of trade unionism in Northern Ireland.

These difficulties are sufficient reason for rejecting the traditional Irish Marxist perspective as a basis from which to develop and understanding of trade unionism in Northern Ireland. However, a rejection of traditional Irish marxism is also a rejection of the evolutionist and reductionist assumptions upon which it is based. This is no loss, nor does it necessarily involve a rejection of marxism as such. The notion that history is governed by underlying laws of evolution, and its corollary that it is possible to identify social laws to which can be attached the same force which accrues to laws in the natural sciences, may serve to impose an order on the untidiness of history - and has consequently had an enduring attraction for social theorists of disparate ideological hues - but it is now regarded as untenable by a wide range of scholars, marxist and non-marxist alike. As Reid notes, the traditional Irish marxist approach, 'finds its most authoritative support from The Communist Manifesto, the polemical sections of Capital and Lenin's The Development of Capitalism in Russia' (1980: 113). But as Abrams (1982) and Giddens (1979) indicate, these cannot be seen as representative of Marx's writing as a whole. Both writers note that there is a tension and an ambiguity in Marx's writing; according to the latter (1979: 52):

The Hegelian inheritance in Marx, with its connotation of active consciousness and the coming-to-itself of the subject in history, mingles uneasily and in a unresolved way in Marx's works with an allegiance to a deterministic theory in which actors are propelled by historical laws.

In Abrams view (1982: 109), Marx constructed a model of the capitalist mode of production and identified tendencies and contradictions within it which led him to the conclusion that the working class was the potential agent of revolutionary change, but,

The point of writing The Communist Manifesto and of all the other polemical and directly political activities in which Marx and Engels engaged, was precisely that the transition to socialism was not an inevitable necessity of capitalism but a possibility within it which could be realised through appropriate action.

Once evolutionist and reductionist assumptions have been rejected it becomes possible to recognise what many marxists - and Marx himself - have also recognised: that the 'optimism' of the view of working class and trade union development presented in The

Communist Manifesto was misplaced (Hyman, 1975: 4 and 8-11); that trade unionism and socialism are distinct phenomena; and that trade unionism is compatible with disparate political affiliations. For example, two of the foremost marxist theorists of twentieth century, Lenin and Gramsci, criticised colleagues who tended to assume a necessary identity between trade unionism and socialism. The former drew a sharp - perhaps too sharp - distinction between trade unionism and socialism:

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness ie the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. (1978: 31-32).

The latter, as part of a debate among the Italian left in 1920 on the relationship between trade unions and the factory councils which were in 1920 widely regarded as the Italian equivalent of soviets (Hoare, 1986: xxxvii-xxxx), argued:

The trade union is not a pre-determined phenomena. It becomes a determinate institution, ie it takes on a definite historical form to the extent that the strength and the will of the workers who are its members impress a policy and propose an aim that define it. (1977: 265).

Kendall's (1975) review of the labour histories of Western European states reveals that although trade unions are often associated with labourist or social democratic politics they are compatible with a range of diverse political philosophies. In Britain, as Hyman (1979b: 63) has argued, the conception of trade unionism as an aspect of a political struggle against capital is, 'at best an extremely subsidiary element within a tradition and an ideology powerfully dominated by the centrality of collective bargaining.'

If, as I have argued, trade unionism need not be viewed as an essentially political institution, then it is possible to distinguish two sets of questions in relation to Northern Ireland. One set of questions is as follows: why have socialist politics only occasionally - and then only in a reformist form - attracted significant support among the working class? Conversely, why have Protestant workers tended to vote for socially conservative Unionist

parties, and Catholic workers for socially conservative nationalist parties? In other words why have politics in Northern Ireland revolved around mutually antagonistic religious, rather than class, identities? This is the 'big' question to which much of the literature on Northern Ireland is addressed, and with which many of the authors reviewed here have been mainly concerned. However, there is a more modest set of questions which - having rejected the teleology of traditional Irish marxism - can be summed up in the following way: to what extent, and in what ways, did sectarian divisions between Protestant and Catholic workers influence the development of trade unionism amongst them? It is with the latter question that I am mainly concerned in this thesis.

The reasons why I choose to explore this question in relation to shirt workers in Derry will be explained in the section 1.4 of this chapter; for the moment I only wish to emphasise that it is not part of my concern to account for the sectarian divide in Derry society and politics, or for the failure of socialist politics there. Rather I intend to show where, when, and how sectarian divisions were relevant (or irrelevant) in the history of the unions which organised in the city's shirt industry. This has a certain intrinsic interest - as I have already indicated Derry is a significant place and shirtmaking was its staple industry - but the main value of my study is as a contribution to an important, ongoing debate: as will become apparent, it calls into question the general validity of many of the assertions discussed above. However, having examined the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry I will, as part of my conclusions, attempt to use this particular case study to say something about the 'big' questions in Northern Irish life: about the nature of sectarianism, and about the relationship between trade unionism, socialism, Unionism, and nationalism.

1.3 An Alternative Approach

In the process of defining the problem to which my thesis will be addressed I suggested that trade unionism had been mis-conceived, particularly by traditional Irish marxists, and claimed that my study would call into question the general validity of many of the assertions which have been made about the effect of sectarianism on the development of trade unionism in Northern Ireland. It is now necessary for me to make explicit, and justify, the theoretical criteria which underlie my critique and according to which this study has been organised. The simplest way to do this is by returning to Rolston's analysis and examining his assumptions about the nature of social reality.

Rolston (1980) does not make his theoretical preconceptions plain, but, as I have argued, his analysis is based in traditional Irish marxism, and, although theoretically more sophisticated than, for example, Farrell, he shares the reductionism and evolutionism which is characteristic of that form of marxism. In evolutionist and reductionist theories, human action, and the meanings and intentions which underly it, tend to be treated as though of little consequence. Rolston (1980) clearly shares this trait. Thus, his main argument is that sectarian 'divisions in the working class were necessarily reconstituted in the movement that sought to organise that class' irrespective of 'the attitudes' or 'utterances' of trade unionists (1980: 71 and 84); he wishes to characterise trade unions as sectarian, but not 'impugn the sincerity of individual trade unionists' (1980: 81). This is linked to his view of sectarianism as one of the major structural divisions in Northern Irish society: sectarianism is ubiquitous, therefore, although trade unionists may not have been markedly sectarian in their attitudes, their actions (or inaction) inevitably had sectarian consequences.

That this is Rolston's view is made explicit in a more recent book (Munck and Rolston 1987). The book is about the relationship between socialism and sectarianism in Belfast in the 1930s and is based on interviews with people who were involved in the labour movement, the republican movement, and loyalist politics at that

time. The authors note the difficulties which they had in reconciling the idiosyncratic experiences of the people who were interviewed with wider social structures and social change; the dilemma is resolved in the following way: 'We believe in the social determination of the individual so that our respondents would be part of a broader social flow whatever personal characteristics might be displayed' (1987: 13). If individuals are socially determined, and merely act out a pre-given role according to their position in the social structure, then their attitudes, intentions, and motives are irrelevant, or, insofar as they are relevant, may be inferred from their structural situation. Thus, as we have already seen, when Rolston discusses the 'contempt' of skilled Protestant trade unionists towards unskilled and unorganised Catholics, he asserts, 'whether... [the] contempt derived from the exclusivity of the skilled, from sectarian attitudes and/or from sexist attitudes hardly matters to those on the receiving end of it' (1980: 72). Clearly, he is not very interested either. Indeed, in another article Rolston (1983) makes it clear that when he talks about 'sectarian trade unionism' he is not necessarily referring to the religious affiliations of the members or their attitudes and intentions, but to some esoteric property of trade unionism as an institution, and that he is far more interested in the latter than the former:

The word sectarianism is not used in the narrow sense to connote merely a set of attitudes. It refers to the material reality, reconstructed and hence perpetuated in everyday life. If sectarianism is taken in the narrow sense of a set of attitudes only, then it can refer to the attitudes of both the dominating and the dominated. But in a structural sense of the word, it can only be fully applied to the activities of the dominating. This approach to the analysis of sectarianism has respectable links with analyses of other ideologies, for example, racism... and sexism... By analogy, if racism exists only at the level of attitudes, then blacks who hate whites can be said to be as racist as whites who hate blacks. Many state policies to supposedly counteract racism are built on that assessment. But, if racism is a phenomenon at the structural level, then it is only institutions and policies designed and managed by powerful whites that can properly be said to be racist in as far as they perpetuate the domination of blacks. In this sense, even those institutions and policies designed to counteract racist attitudes can themselves be racist. (1983: 206)

There are a number of problems with this perspective. The most obvious one is that the meaning of the term 'sectarianism' becomes somewhat elusive: it is an institutional phenomena, but it is not dependent on the attitudes or even, necessarily, the religious identities of the people who compose that institution. But there are more fundamental problems with this kind of approach; these are well summed up by Giddens (1979: 1) when he takes issue with the view that 'institutions... work "behind the backs" of the social actors who produce and reproduce them,' and with the

common tendency of many otherwise divergent shools of sociological thought... to adopt the methodological tactic of beginning their analyses by discounting agent's reasons for their action (or what I prefer to call the rationalisation of action), in order to discover the 'real' stimuli to their activity, of which they are ignorant. Such a stance, however, is not only defective from the point of view of social theory, it is one with strongly-defined and potentially offensive political implications. It implies the derogation of the lay actor.

Rolston's (and Munck's) stance is 'defective from the point of view of social theory' because it fails to recognise that institutions - such as sectarianism and trade unionism - are created and re-created through the actions of the individuals who constitute them, and that to understand them it is necessary to take account of the meanings and intentions which those individuals attach to their actions and predicaments. To understand the effect of sectarian divisions on the development of trade unionism in Northern Ireland one must take account of the views and intentions of the people who produced, reproduced, or changed the trade unions. But one must also recognise that although institutions are created by individuals, individuals are also influenced by the social and institutional milieux in which they live. This is the dilemma of human agency; it is, in Abram's words (1982: xiii), 'an age old problem.' Recently, however, there have been a number of attempts to understand social phenomena as historical process or in terms of what Giddens (1979: 5) describes as

the duality of structure... the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practice: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of its constitution.

Abrams refers to this kind of approach as 'the problematic of structuring.' My thesis is firmly located within this problematic, and it is the perspective from which I will criticise the authors - mainly traditional Irish marxists but also their critics - reviewed in the last section. For although I have developed my argument in relation to Rolston and traditional Irish marxism, Bew, Gibbon and Patterson are - insofar as they conform to Althusser's 'theoretical anti-humanism' - equally susceptible⁽³⁾. Indeed, as I will argue in the next section, the failure to acknowledge human agency is a problem shared by the functionalist and structuralist paradigms which have dominated anthropology and social theory more generally in the last 30 or 40 years.

I will describe how I came to embrace the problematic of structuring, and elaborate on it further, in the next section; for the moment I am more concerned with discussing its consequences for my mode of exposition. Once one rejects deterministic theory in which actors' meanings, aims, and intentions are regarded as being simply given by their position in the social structure - whether that position is defined in terms of class, ethnicity, or some mixture of the two as in the case of Rolston - one must take seriously how they interpret their own situations, and what they say about their intentions; and this means that the researcher must take into account realities and identities which cannot be reduced to class or ethnicity (cf Gledhill, 1988: 4 and 15). Consequently, although my main concern is with the question: to what extent, and in what ways, have sectarian divisions among Derry shirt workers influenced the development of trade unionism in local factories? it will be necessary to take into account, identities, social realities, and institutional patterns other than those of a religious and political nature. Indeed, posed as it is, the question implies some assessment of the influence of sectarianism in relation to other factors. But when one examines any actual historical event one is confronted by a mass of detail, so it might be thought that the question of choosing which details are relevant, and which are not, is arbitrary and problematic. In practice, it is not so difficult, I was guided in my choice by the patterns which emerged in the material which I gathered during my research and also by theoretical

considerations. By the latter I mean that I paid particular attention to those factors which have been identified as being significant influences in the development of trade unionism elsewhere, particularly in Britain. In effect I will be attempting to 'tease-out' and distinguish those characteristics of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry which are unique to the local situation and which reflect sectarian realities from those characteristics which it shares with trade unions in other places.

The foregoing implies a view of social and historical causality which is quite like that advocated by Max Weber; it is worth making it explicit. As Abrams (1982: 105) suggests:

Causality in history does not for him [Weber] imply intention nor does it imply a social world governed by abstract general laws. Causal importance is a matter of the contribution of any specific factor in a given historical complex to the construction of that complex as a whole.

The relevance of this mode of exposition can best be illustrated by taking up the debate between the traditional Irish marxists and their critics at the point where we left off in the last section. As the reader may remember, Reid and Patterson suggest that the exclusivism of organised skilled Protestant workers in Belfast had more to do with routine sectionalism, with certain types of trade unionism, or - in relation to linen workers - with gender based differences than it had with sectarianism. Here we have a rudimentary attempt at the process of distinguishing what was peculiarly sectarian in the case of trade unionism in Northern Ireland. Patterson takes this kind of argument further in a more recent article (1984). Here, he argues (1984: 79) that the Belfast trade union movement in its formative years before the war was not unlike the labour movement in the rest of the United Kingdom,

in fact the 'problem' as far as the politics of the labour movement in Ulster is concerned is, in part, in the eyes of the beholders... for too long historians of nationalist sympathies have tended to exaggerate the dismal side of the labour history of Ulster.

In relation to linen workers, Patterson notes a number of factors which retarded trade unionism: first, their position in the labour market was weak; second, 'there was the complex of factors related to

a predominantly female labour force'; third, cultural factors such as localism and the tradition of daughters following mothers to work in the same mill, engendered a pacific acceptance of working conditions; and fourth, paternalism on the part of employers promoted class peace. So far as sectarianism is concerned, he writes (1984: 76):

A final factor in weakening unionisation in linen and indeed many other sections of industry, is often considered to have been sectarian division inside the working class... The notion that religious differences, encouraged by employers, were at the heart of many of the problems of the labour movement in Ulster has been at the centre of a traditional view of the province's labour history. However if we wish to deal with the structural reasons for the weaknesses of union organisation among linen workers, then the factors outlined above are of fundamental importance. Sectarianism would, at most, have exacerbated these problems at particular times of heightened political tension. But it is important to remember that the majority of employers wanted a disciplined workforce and production unhindered by sectarian outbursts. Those employers who, like the Ewatts, encouraged an almost completely Protestant labour force were in a minority.

Rolston, in his later work with Munck (Munck and Rolston, 1987), remains wedded to the traditional Irish marxist view that sectarianism was the major factor inhibiting the development of trade unionism in Belfast (1987: 114, 117, and 122), and that 'competition over jobs seemed to be the root of most sectarianism in the industrialised world' (1987: 112), but, confronted with the recollections of trade union activists, he is forced to acknowledge that there may have been other factors involved. In relation to shipyard workers, he mentions fear of unemployment. The linen workers who were interviewed mention various factors such as managerial opposition and paternalism, the high turnover in the factories due to women getting married and having children, and prejudice against women workers on the part of male trade unionists. Munck (1986: 87) also tends to be more circumspect about the effect of sectarianism on trade unionism:

We can accept that deliberate discrimination cannot explain everything, but... the effect of exclusivist practices (whatever their origin) was felt predominantly by one section of the working class. We can accept that most trade unions were sincere in their commitment to non-sectarianism, but the fact remains that employment in the shipyard usually required an Orange Order contact, and this precluded Catholics. Nor did the trade unions systematically and consciously fight against sectarianism

amongst their members during the regular disturbances of the nineteenth century.

Where there is little disagreement is on the fact that trade union organisation was thwarted by sectarianism. A prime case of this was the linen mills, where a mixed workforce proved remarkably difficult to organise right into the twentieth century. Yet we must not forget that the linen workers were also predominantly female, and for this reason they were neglected by the paternalist trade union leaders of the time... What this suggests is that sectarianism did indeed weaken the efforts at trade union organisation, but as part of a constellation of exclusivist practices directed at the the less skilled and women as well.

Thus, while the protagonists in the debate about trade unionism in Northern Ireland remain preoccupied with sectarianism, they have begun to acknowledge the potential significance of other factors, and of identities and divisions other than religion and politics. Pre-eminent among these is gender. This reflects an increasing awareness in the wider literature of important differences in the way in which men and women relate to trade unionism. More than 90% of the shirt workforce was, and is, female; thus, in attempting to answer my question about the effect of sectarianism on the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry, it is possible to anticipate that gender will feature among the 'other factors' which I consider. However, I will reserve discussion of the various arguments about gender and trade unionism to the appropriate parts of my analysis.

1.4 The Dialectics of Field Research

This history of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry has been researched and written as a thesis within the discipline of social anthropology. However, my problematic, as outlined in the last section, does not appear to bear the stamp of anthropology: I have not made any reference to anthropological texts, not even to the considerable anthropological literature on Northern Ireland; I have defined my study in relation to a particular institution, trade unionism, but rather than study how it operates or functions in the present according to some specifically anthropological model, I have advocated an historical analysis; and having adopted such an approach

the research technique most commonly associated with anthropology, participant observation, becomes void. In this section I will explain these absences, silences, and preferences, and argue that, despite appearances, my work is firmly situated within the discipline of social anthropology. I have chosen to do this by giving an account of my practical experience of field research because it was in the 'dialectic' between theory and experience (Harris, 1987: 6) that the problematic outlined above was developed, and because it will demonstrate that my earlier rejection of teleology and my insistence on open-ended research was not just rhetoric.

When I began as a student of social anthropology in 1977, the subject was in a state of flux, but the most dynamic schools of thought within the discipline were structural marxism, and 'world-systems and underdevelopment theories' (see Ortner 1984: 141 and passim), and it was through these theories that I first became interested in Ireland as an object of study. By the time I began my fieldwork in March 1982 ⁽⁴⁾ my world-view was an unstable amalgam of the structuralist marxism and the theories of underdevelopment and ethnicity which I had been taught as an undergraduate together with traditional Irish marxism and Bew et al's revisionism. It was based on essentially the same deterministic model of social reality in which priority is given to social and economic relations rather than actual individuals as that which I rejected in the last section. I shared Irish marxism's preoccupation with the relationship between sectarianism and class politics, and my main reason for choosing to do research in Derry was that all the literature on this subject had focused on Belfast, and that Derry, Northern Ireland's second city, had been neglected. But another reason was that, for me, Derry had that sense of 'otherness' which is still regarded as a crucial ingredient of anthropological research (Ortner 1984: 134): all of my life - apart from five years in London as an undergraduate student and then as a postgraduate student - has been spent in Northern Ireland, but until I started my fieldwork I had had no connection with Derry, and whereas I come from Belfast Protestant background, Derry is a mainly Catholic city.

With these theoretical perspectives in mind, it is easy to understand why the anthropological literature on Northern Ireland had little initial influence either on my choice of a topic, or on my theoretical approach to it. To be sure, following Harris (1972), there have been many anthropological studies which deal with sectarianism, but these nearly all focus on 'small scale rural networks' (Donning and McFarlane, 1983: 113). Indeed, when I began my research the only studies of urban sectarianism which were based on anthropological methods were those written by Burton (1978), a sociologist, and Nelson (1984), a political scientist. In any case, these studies were concerned with aspects of social reality to which I was, at the time, theoretically unsympathetic. For example, Harris (1972: vii) wanted to show

that attitudes and behaviour are moulded by very complex factors, and that it is absurd to stick a simple label, 'bigot', on to people even when they seem most prejudiced. Such labels explain nothing; it is more difficult but much more rewarding to try with patience to understand their motives.

And Donning and McFarlane (1983: 110) characterise the anthropological literature on Northern Ireland as being concerned with 'informal relations which exist between Catholic and Protestants,' and 'the relevance of being a Protestant and being a Catholic in the mundane areas of everyday life.'

Despite my structuralist marxist preconceptions, I began my fieldwork by engaging in a form of participant observation. I went to public meetings which had anything to do with the local labour movement or local politics, and introduced myself to, and had casual conversations with, trade union activists and officials. As a result of these conversations I became aware that the contemporary structure of trade unionism in the shirt industry is dominated by a three-way split: most of the small number of male workers employed in the processes associated with shirt cutting belonged to the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU), and the women were divided between the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW) and the the ITGWU. My interest was intensified when several of the people I spoke to intimated that these divisions had sectarian undertones such that the ATGWU and NUTGW, both British based unions, tended to Protestant and the ITGWU, an Irish based union, tended to

be Catholic. I decided that I would focus my research on attempting to understand these divisions.

My training as a social anthropologist and my structuralist marxist leanings impelled me to study the contemporary dynamics of the organisational divisions between shirt workers, but gradually I became more interested in tracing their historical development. Contemporary trade union officials were only dimly aware of the origins of these divisions, and none of the unions concerned had retained relevant minutes going back further than the last few years⁽⁵⁾. I started reading back copies of the local newspapers, and I eventually found that the three-way split was rooted in two distinct secessionary movements. The first occurred in the 1920s when, following a protracted strike, male shirt cutters defected from the United Garment Workers' Union (UGW, the direct precursor of the NUTGW) and joined the ATGWU. The second occurred in 1952 when the Derry Branch Committee of the NUTGW seceded and set up an independent union which later transferred to the ITGWU. Initially I regarded this historical research as simply a matter of gathering material for a chapter on what anthropologists and sociologists usually call 'the historical background'; however, it gradually became the central focus of my thesis. Two things underlay this shift from the present to the past. The first was that my early experience of participant observation convinced me that a contemporary ethnography of trade unionism and sectarianism in the shirt industry would be extremely difficult for someone who did not have a clearly defined local identity: I began my fieldwork shortly after the end of the hunger strike by republican prisoners in Long Kesh, and the atmosphere in Northern Ireland was particularly fraught; and later, with the onset of the 'super-grass trials', the term 'informant' or 'source' took on a sinister meaning outside academia. On the other hand, I found it impossible to construct a local identity which was both morally defensible and relevant to the contemporary situation. For reasons which will be made clear, questions of identity were less problematic with respect to an investigation of an historical nature. The second was simply that I found the the history of the three-way split fascinating. This fascination was undoubtedly linked to the dramatic quality of the original secessionary movements, but more importantly,

I felt sure that the organisational divisions in the shirt industry could only be properly understood in terms of the processes by which they emerged, and that the analysis which resulted from the attempt to come to such an understanding would form a significant contribution to the debate about trade unionism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

The newspaper accounts of the two secessionary movements were fairly detailed, but were not in themselves sufficient to construct an analysis. In the absence of any other sources, I decided to interview retired managers, union officials, and ordinary shirt workers in an effort out find out more. Initially, I usually contacted these people on the recommendation of, and using introductions provided by, some of the contemporary members of the labour movement with whom I had become acquainted, but I gradually came to rely more heavily on the recommendations provided by the people I interviewed; in the field of oral history this strategy is known as 'snowballing' (see Thompson, 1978: 128 and Rolston and Munck, 1987: 10). When I began interviewing I regarded it as essentially an exercise in correcting ambiguities in the newspaper accounts and gathering 'facts' about the structure of the industry and of the labour process which they had not mentioned. However, as I read over these interviews in an attempt to cull the required factual information from them, it slowly became apparent to me that the people whom I had interviewed did not conform to my neat preconceived structural categories; for example Catholics were not necessarily nationalists and members of the ITGWU, and Protestants were not necessarily Unionists and supporters of the NUTGW. Furthermore, they defined events and situations in ways which my theories (literally) could not comprehend; for example, I was frequently told that the 1952 breakaway was inspired by a personality conflict not by ideological or sectarian differences as I had assumed. It was at this point that I started to question my theoretical preconceptions. This self questioning, led me to a series of realisations: that it was necessary to take account of the actor's intentions and his/her view of events, that these could not be inferred from the structure of a situation, but that they had be

directly studied; ultimately it led me to locate my work within the problematic of structuring.

I embraced the problematic of structuring because it helped me make sense not only of my data but of my project as a whole. First, it helped me to understand the kind of knowledge which is communicated during interviews with people about their past experience, and thus enabled me to develop interviewing as a systematic research strategy. Second, it provided the theoretical link between, on the one hand, my historical approach to the understanding of institutions and, on the other, my concern with action and meaning as well as structure; moreover, it enabled me to relate both to recent developments in anthropology. For the moment I am concerned only with the second point; the first will be discussed in detail in the next section.

As Harris (1987: 3) has pointed out there has long been a strand in anthropology which has attempted to understand culture in terms of both,

the complex factors which structure a situation for the individuals caught up in it *and* [her emphasis]... the 'meaning' of the situation for these individuals; the way, that is, that they understand it and how, in consequence, they try to manipulate the structure,

and which has recognised that,

it is not legitimate simply to infer meaning from structure but [that] we must also grant significance to people's own understanding of their aims and actions, [and that] we must in principle allow them to 'speak for themselves.'

However, this strand was never explicitly or adequately theorised within anthropology - or indeed the other social sciences. Within structuralism and functionalism, which, as Giddens (1979: 9) notes, have been the dominant paradigms in anthropology and general social theory over the last 40 years, action and actors are subordinated to the system and to structure. On the other hand, theories such as symbolic interactionism and transactionalism which attempt to take account of action and meaning fail to deal adequately with institutional and cultural patterning (Giddens, 1976: 156 and Ortner, 1984: 146). Recently, however, there have been a number of attempts within anthropology - and parallel attempts in sociology, history, linguistics, and literary criticism - to comprehend the social

process in terms of human agency without collapsing into subjectivism or objectivism. In anthropology the most prominent exponent of this approach is Bourdieu (1978), in sociology it has been embraced by Giddens (1979), Abrams (1982), and Elias (1978); Ortner (1984), dubs these 'the newer practice' theorists. All of these authors are united by - and distinguished from previous social theorists - by the argument that the best way to understand the relation between action and structure is in terms eventuation, as process in time. Abrams (1982: xv) insists on the need for a 'sociology of process as an alternative to our... inadequate sociologies of action and system.' Giddens (1979: 113) argues against functionalism - in its non-marxist and marxist varieties (cf Harris, 1987: 226) - in the following way:

Not even the most deeply sedimented institutional features of societies come about because those societies need them to do so. They come about historically, as a result of concrete conditions that have in every case to be directly analysed; the same holds for their persistence.

And Ortner concludes (1984: 158-159)

Rather than seeing the theoretical shift in the field as a move from structures and systems to persons and practices, it might thus be seen as a shift from static, synchronic analyses to diachronic, processual ones... a practice approach offers, or at least promises, a model that implicitly unifies both historical and anthropological studies.

Thus, although my thesis is historical in character and is not based on participant observation, it is, nevertheless, profoundly anthropological both in the way that it evolved, and in its central concerns. Harris (1987: 5-6) writes that an essential characteristic of anthropological research is that it is,

relatively open-minded... there is a 'dialectical' relationship between theory and experience of the field. Initial perceptions are essentially guided by theoretical expectations, but these in turn will develop, and be altered by field experience.

As I have shown, this thesis has evolved as the result of long and quite painful dialectic between theory and experience. Jenkins (1983: 22) describes 'the interaction between researcher and subject' in anthropological fieldwork as involving a 'potent de-stabilisation of the taken-for-granted conventional wisdom of the social scientist'; this has also being my experience of doing research. As we have seen, Donning and McFarlane (1983: 110) characterise the

anthropological literature on Northern Ireland as being concerned with 'informal relations which exist between Catholic and Protestants'; Harris (1987: 5) describes the 'informal and the unintended' as the 'twin areas of particular anthropological concern.' I would not agree that these are defining features of anthropological work, but it is true that once one adopts an approach in which priority is given to understanding what actors say about their actions and predicaments, then, the informal and the unintended do, as will become apparent in this case, assume considerable importance.

I wish to make one final point in this section. Although I locate my study within the problematic of structuring, and use insights made by several of its exponents, I do not intend to advocate any one of the general theories proposed by them. The dilemma of human agency is an age old problem, but the problematic of structuring is a comparatively new departure and a variety of divergent theories and methods have been elaborated (cf Ortner, 1984: 127 and Abrams 1982: vii). Moreover, although Bourdieu and Giddens - the two most prominent advocates of the problematic of structuring - set out to transcend the old oppositions between subject and object, action and structure, they ultimately fail in their own terms: as Jenkins points out (1983: 5 and 11-12) both tend to reify social structure. Indeed, Marx (1959: 109) may well have been correct when he suggested that these oppositions can never be adequately resolved in the realm of abstract thought, and, perhaps, the best that can be achieved within social science is, as Abrams argues (1982: xv), to recognise that individuals and society constitute each other historically.

1.5 Methodological Issues

The main research technique employed in this project was the in-depth semi-structured interview. In the last section I explained, in practical terms, how I first began using this technique in the course of my field work. Altogether I interviewed 35 people: 11 trade union

officials, 5 male shirt cutters, 12 women shirtmakers, and 7 managers; I met and had, often quite lengthy, conversations with many more shirt workers, trade unionists, and political activists. From this 35 I constructed a sample of 11 retired union officials and activists whom I interviewed in more detail (see appendix 1). Much of the empirical material presented in this thesis is derived from the recollections of the 11 people who constituted my sample, but there is a sense in which all the interviews and conversations which I conducted in the course of my fieldwork contributed to this thesis, and, on a few appropriate occasions, I refer to, or quote from, an interview or conversation with someone who was not part my sample.

The use of interviews in social and historical analysis (ie oral history) is not unproblematic. In this section I want to examine some of the problems with the technique and discuss how I constructed my sample in such a way as to minimise them. There are two main problems. First, there is the problem of the relationship between what respondents say about a particular event during an interview and what actually happened. For example, Donning and McFarlane (1983: 110) advocate participant observation as research strategy in preference to interviews because,

attitudes and actions are not in any simple relationship with one another: not only do they interact but they often seem to be in apparent contradiction with one another,

and as a participant observer one can study what people do as well as what they say. Historians, committed to their discipline's traditional stress on documentary sources, have made a similar kind of criticism of oral history. They argue that recollections elicited in the present cannot give an accurate picture of past events and behaviour because such recollections are susceptible to distortion due to the fallibility of memory and the influence of subsequent changes in social values or norms, or of subsequent experiences, on a respondent's perceptions (cf Popular Memory Group, 1982: 223-224). A second problem with the use of interviews in historical and social analysis is that of the selection of respondents: how can one make analytical statements about events or social patterns on the basis of interviews with a small number of people who may be untypical or unrepresentative? I will consider each of these problems in turn,

looking at how other social researchers and oral historians have dealt with them and then elaborating my own response.

Paul Thompson, one of the leading exponents of oral history, has responded to the arguments about memory lapse and retrospective re-assessment in the following way. He argues (1978: 100) that all historical sources - including the documents used by traditional historians - are biased in the same way as an interviewee's recollections:

newspapers, court hearings, Royal Commission interviews or committee minutes... are also retrospective. Neither contemporary nor historical evidence is a direct reflection of physical facts or behaviour. Facts and events are reported in a way which gives them social meaning.

Moreover, according to the findings of social psychologists and gerontologists, memory is relatively reliable and constant over long periods of time. Finally he argues (1978: 112) that it is not difficult to identify retrospective assessments in 'the ordinary life-story in western societies' (as opposed to the formal and stylised oral traditions of some tribal societies): 'it is often quite conscious, and when it is not may be identified through the anachronism with which it is conveyed.'

It seems to me that Thompson's arguments are valid and convincing; however, using insights derived from Giddens's theory of 'structuration' it is possible to make a stronger case for the validity of knowledge gained about the past through interviews conducted in the present. Traditional historians tend to eschew explicit theory, but much of their work is based on an implicit empiricism (cf Abrams, 1982: xvi) according to which they assume that there is an objective world of facts and that the

'source,' the product of a now unchangeable past... provides the possibility of a knowledge that is objective if it is honestly and critically interrogated. (Popular Memory Group, 1982: 221).

This is akin to what Jenkins calls (1983: 10) 'objectivist epistemology' in social science, according to which,

not only is there an objective reality, but that actors' accounts, folkmodels, are necessarily 'false knowledge', and that objective reality may only be apprehended in the analytical models of scientific practice.

Against this, in the theory of structuration, actors' accounts or

folk models are given central importance; it is recognised that, as Giddens (1979: 5) argues, 'social agents are knowledgeable about the social systems which they constitute and reproduce in their action,' that actors 'reflexively monitor their conduct', and that they can, and routinely do, give reasons for their conduct. However, Giddens also recognises that

the reasons that actors supply discursively for their conduct in the course of practical enquiries, in the context of daily social life, stand in a relation of some tension to the rationalisation of action as actually embodied within the stream of conduct of the agent (1979: 57),

and alerts us to various aspects of this tension. Thus there is the possibility of 'deliberate dissimulation', the influence of 'unconscious elements of motivation', and, most important from the perspective of social science, the possibility that actions can

escape the scope of the purposes of the actor. The unintended consequences of action are of central importance to social theory insofar as they are systematically incorporated within the process of reproduction of institutions. (1979: 59).

In this context, to paraphrase the Popular Memory Group (1982: 226), the problems, insuperable difficulties, and closures adduced by traditional historians and empiricist social scientists become, respectively, a resource, an agendum, and a starting point. I did not interview people with the aim of 'finding out' absolute, pre-given, facts about past events, but so as to understand their views of situations and the reasons why they acted in particular ways. I conducted my interviews such that silences, contradictions, and retrospective assessments, could be identified and learnt from. Thus, I interviewed virtually all of my sample of 11 respondents more than once, and I covered the same ground from different perspectives in the second (and in some cases the third, fourth, and fifth) interviews which were usually separated by an interval of several months. However, it is not possible to discern contradictions and silences simply through checking interviews for internal consistency. I compared each respondent's recollections with those of the others in my sample, and all of them were compared with the documentary record. Thompson (1978: 178) distinguishes 'three ways in which oral history can be put together': 'the single life-story narrative'; a collection of life-histories used to elucidate a theme such as

family life, or portray a particular community or social group; and

cross-analysis: the oral evidence is treated as a quarry to construct an argument... wherever the prime aim becomes analysis, the overall shape can no longer be governed by the life-story form of evidence, but must emerge from the inner logic of the argument. This will require much briefer quotations, with evidence from one interview compared with that from another. Usually... only a bare context for each quotation can be provided. (1978: 204-205).

The latter comes closest to describing my project: I did not interview people with a view to constructing an analysis of individual careers, rather, I intended to use my interview material to elaborate an analysis of particular events and processes in the development of a set of institutions. However, to interpret the meaning of silences, contradictions and retrospective re-assessments it is necessary to analyse particular recollections in relation to each respondent's biography and their present situation. Thus, although my interviews were planned with the intention of eliciting knowledge about particular aspects of my respondents' identities - their religious and political affiliations and those aspects of their experience pertinent to the events and processes in which I was most interested - I also questioned them about broader aspects of their biography: their parents, schooling, work history, residence, marital status and family life. My interviews were structured, but not so structured as to prevent respondents from pursuing aspects of their life which they thought important. As Thompson point out, it is not always practicable to contextualise every quotation as it appears in the text, and for this reason I have included appendix 1 giving the biographical details of each of my respondents. By following these procedures it was possible for me - and hopefully for the reader - to develop a fairly rounded view of each of the *dramatis personae* in this history, and to locate what each of them told me in the context of their broader life history and of their current situation. It should also allay the anthropologist's suspicion of the use of quotations as 'apt illustrations... that simply confirm an author's argument.' (Harris 1987: 4).

The second problem concerns the representativeness of respondents. The procedure which I have described above is lengthy and time consuming, and that means that only a relatively small number of people can be interviewed; how does one know if they are

typical or representative? A related problem is: how can one use the experiences 'of a few individuals to make more general statements about institutions, broader social patterns and processes? Paul Thompson (1978), the Popular Memory Group (1982), and, it may be remembered from section 1.3, Rolston and Munck (1987) all supply different answers to these questions. I will consider each of these before describing my own approach, but first it is important to further clarify what is meant and, more importantly, not meant by the insistence on according central importance to actors' accounts. It does not mean that the only valid explanations are those given by actors (in anthropological parlance emic explanations), but that, in Jenkins's words (1979: 10),

folk models and analytical models must be given epistemological equality... both are essentially oriented towards similar ends: the practical investment of perceived reality with meaning... equality does not, however, mean that they are the same... analytical models... [are] capable of making more sense of social reality... for a number of reasons: analytical models may be capable of accommodating the contradictions between conflicting folk models, [and] social analysts may have access to a broader body of knowledge than their research subjects.

Sociologists overcome the problem of the representativeness of respondents by sampling a given population or group at random. Thompson points out (1978: 122) that this is not practicable for the oral historian: random sampling depends on the availability of a full list of the people who compose a particular population, an electoral register for example, and this is rarely available for populations or groups which existed in the past. And even if it was possible to survey a past population at random, such a survey would probably distort the past and yield material of an intrinsically lower quality: 'some of the best potential informants will be missed, and others often less willing will be chosen in their place.' He argues (1978: 128) that

to meet the various problems raised by retrospective representativeness, the oral historian needs to develop, rather than the standardised random battery sample, a method of strategic sampling.

Strategic sampling can take various forms depending on the nature of the problem being studied, but it involves ensuring that a sample

includes people from all the significant social strata of a particular population, or all the organisations involved in an event.

The Popular Memory Group tend to dismiss Thompson's efforts at sampling as an unfortunate response to the criticisms of oral history made by traditional historians. They argue that all that is required to enable an oral historian to make inferences about broader social patterns is

the presence of sources of relevant knowledge other than the [respondant's] account itself... and the presence of some explicit and productive theory of social relations and forms of consciousness. (1982: 227).

The theory which they suggest involves what I have argued in this chapter: namely, the recognition that

Marxism has always contained within it both a stress on human individuality as a socially produced phenomenon and a recognition that our constitution within social relations is an active process of which we may become conscious and over which we may engage in struggles of a collective kind. (1982: 235).

Armed with such a theory, it is possible for an oral historian 'to see the representative elements of individual life histories as part of a more general history' (1982: 234). Munck and Rolston (1987) solve the problem of the representativeness of respondents and of bridging the gap between private narratives and large scale social processes by attempting a form of strategic sampling, and, as I have shown, by asserting that

we believe in the social determination of the individual so that our respondents would be part of a broader social flow whatever personal characteristics might be displayed. (1987: 13)

The inadequacy of the latter formula is implicitly acknowledged in a confused 'Afterword on Ideology' where Munck writes (1987: 202):

Our oral history testimonies are not simple records of past events but complex cultural products involving still *untheorised* [my emphasis] relations between the 'private' and the political, the past and the present. We must seek the 'matrix of meaning' within a discursive formation, the system of social/psychological/subconscious relationships which make sense of our experience.

I agree with the Popular Memory Group that, armed with a theory in which actors are seen as both constituting and constituted by social relations, and with access to other sources of knowledge, it

is often possible to gain an understanding of wider social and institutional patterns from a single life history, but I also found that it was crucial to attempt a form of strategic sampling. I will specify the 'additional sources of knowledge' in a moment but first I want to discuss the form that my strategic sampling took. Given that I was interested in finding out the reasons why, at particular junctures, some shirt workers joined one of the three unions which organised in the Derry shirt industry in preference to the other two, and in tracing the development of each of these organisations, it was important that I interviewed people who were members of the various organisations at particular times. Obviously, it was not possible to interview each and every member of the three different organisations during the last 60 years, nor, for the same reasons adduced by Thompson, was it possible, or desirable, to sample at random the shirt workers who were members of each of these organisations during the period with which I was concerned. The 'snow balling' strategy - conducting follow-up interviews with a particular respondent's friends - which I had used in my first round of interviews was also inadequate for my purposes as it tends to limit one's sample to the social networks of a few individuals. I decided, therefore, to construct a sample of respondents who had been officials of, or activists in, each of the unions which organised in the shirt industry during the period with which I was concerned, and who had had experience of the secessionary movements mentioned above. I was also careful to ensure that my sample included Protestants and Catholics, and men and women. Altogether, as I indicated at the beginning of this section, my strategic sample included 11 people.

The construction of the sample was facilitated by the existence of four 'other sources of knowledge': the reports of Branch activity in local newspapers and in union journals, the minutes of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW 1924-1926, and the minutes of the Shirt Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU 1950-1951. Using these I was able to construct a list of the officials and main activists in each union. As it turned out, I was unable to interview every person on my list: some were dead, some were unwilling to be interviewed, and in other cases it was not possible, for various reasons, to conduct a full interview. This gave rise to a few lacunae in my sample, but I was,

for the most part, able to fill these gaps by asking each of my respondents to name people who were actively involved in a particular organisation at a particular time. My decision to focus on union officials and activists was undoubtedly influenced by the (comparative) ease of constructing a sample, but it can be justified on other grounds: activists and officials are the people whose actions contributed most to the production and reproduction of the unions; by virtue of their positions they were likely to be more knowledgeable about their union and about events in its history than the ordinary member; and they were also more likely to be interested in the subject than the ordinary member - as Thompson (1978:130) points out a person who is interested in a subject usually has more reliable memory of it. However, although most of my main respondents were activists or officials, I also take into account the views of a few ordinary union members and one or two non-trade unionists. These include some of the people whom I contacted during my first round of interviews, and people who I 'came across' by accident in the course of the 12 months which I spent in Derry, or during one of my many subsequent visits.

Access to the additional sources of knowledge specified above undoubtedly made it easier for me to relate individual experiences to larger events and processes, and to wider social relations and patterns. Thus, particular events and processes are analysed not just from the - often contradictory - perspectives of my respondents, but in relation to reports of local union activity in the minutes of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW, in local newspapers, and union journals. These additional sources enabled me to make generalisations which would not otherwise have been possible; for example, starting with lists of the names of Branch Committee members derived from the NUTGW minutes and, then, asking respondents about each of the named individuals it was possible to discern patterns in the sexual and religious composition of Committees and the marital status Committee members over a period of 44 years. Indeed, these additional sources of information were crucial at every stage of my project, not just in the construction of a sample and the interpretation of recollections, but in the framing of questions to be asked. So much so that I have been able to construct a more

detailed analysis of the NUTGW than for the other two organisations; hence the subtitle of my thesis - 'with special reference to the NUTGW.'

Some anthropologists and sociologists have suggested that Northern Ireland poses a particular problem for researchers. For example, Donning and McFarlane suggest (1983: 135):

it is perfectly reasonable to conjecture that the tolerance and harmony to be found in many reports [about Northern Ireland] is simply the product of using interviews more than any other research tool. Everyone in Northern Ireland knows that few people are willing to be frank and open about their strong opposition to the other side, especially to seemingly educated researchers.

And Munck and Rolston (1987: 110) found that a common response to questions about sectarianism in the workplace was 'simply to deny that there was any.' There are really two problems here: the first is the problem of persuading respondents to talk about sectarianism; the second concerns the verisimilitude of what they say. The latter problem is susceptible to the same arguments and procedures which I discussed above, and requires no further elaboration. But what about the problem of persuading people to talk about sectarianism in the first place? Donning and McFarlane and Munck and Rolston are undoubtedly correct: it is not easy to get people in Northern Ireland to talk frankly about sectarianism. I suspect that this applies as much to local researchers as to their interviewees: I initially found it extremely difficult to broach the subject with respondents. Ultimately, however, the problem of getting Northern Irish people to talk about sectarianism seems to be little different than that of getting people anywhere to talk about sensitive or controversial issues, and, as such, can be overcome by the development of skills and techniques which researchers elsewhere have developed. I will briefly describe my own experience.

Part of my own early inhibitions about posing questions to do with sectarianism were that I did not feel that I had a legitimate (in the eyes of my respondents) position from which to be asking such sensitive and personal questions. As Benney and Hughes (1956: 241) note:

Anthropologists have long realised... that it is not until they have been in the society long enough to fit into one of

its better-defined roles that they can 'tap' a valid communication system and hear the kind of messages that the others in the culture hear.

I found it difficult to fit into a role which I could live with and which would have enabled me to 'tap' knowledge about the *present* state of Catholic-Protestant relations in the shirt industry and local labour movement. I am not quite sure why this was, but, as I have already mentioned, I am sure that it had something to do with the general political situation in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s; moreover, I found a few individuals, members of a particular left-wing faction, who were prominent in the local labour movement at the time to be hostile and exclusive. In relation to *past* events, however, I was able to find a role which both made me feel comfortable in asking questions, and my respondents comfortable about replying to them: I became involved in various adult education projects as a teacher of local labour history. My part in organising the 1985 annual conference of the Irish Labour History Society (ILHS) in Derry was one aspect of this role which I found both particularly satisfying and particularly useful.

Various exponents of the interview technique stress that however transient and artificial, an effective interview is also a social relationship in which the interviewer and interviewee talk as social equals (eg Benney and Hughes, 1956: 239 and Thompson 1978: 178). Equality means treating the interviewee with respect and understanding; it also means not coercing a person to give an interview in the first place or to divulge information which they do not wish to divulge. In any case, it can be safely assumed that the more freely information is given the more valid it is likely to be (cf Benney and Hughes, 1983: 237). I usually made my first approach to respondents by a letter in which I briefly explained that I was interested in the history of trade unionism in the shirt industry, and that I was keen to speak to them. It was usually possible make the detailed arrangements for each interview on the phone. This process was made much easier if I could cite a mutual friend or acquaintance who had recommended the respondent to me. I found that, in most cases, the best place to conduct the interview was in the respondent's home: this is generally where people feel most at ease, and with retired people it was usually the most convenient (cf

Thompson, 1978: 174). The question of whether or not to tape-record interview was a problem. One of the first people whom I interviewed seriously '6' expressed the desire not to be tape-recorded. For a while after this I thought it better not to tape-record respondents for fear that it would inhibit them, but I found that I did not feel sufficiently confident about material which I had memorised or noted during an interview and copied-up afterwards. I subsequently made it a practice to ask all respondents if they were willing to be tape-recorded; none refused, and if there was any part of the interview which they did not wish to be recorded it was a simple matter to turn the machine off. Some respondents had no inhibitions about discussing sectarian issues, indeed, a few raised the subject themselves; however, in general I found that people were more forthcoming in the second or third interviews. Undoubtedly, this was a question of my respondents and myself getting to know each other better: although I attempted to empathise with each of my respondents' particular opinions, I never masked my own identity. Moreover, as Thompson says (1978: 180) 'you need to give a little of yourself' in an interview, and once the interview was over and the tape-recorder switched off I, like him, often found myself being given tea, sandwiches, cakes, and engaging in wide-ranging conversations. There were few people with whom I was unable to establish a rapport, but if someone preferred not to be interviewed or not to talk about a particular subject I did not force it.

1.6 Conclusion

There is a widely held belief - promulgated mainly, and certainly most coherently, by traditional Irish marxists - that trade unionism in Northern Ireland has been thwarted by sectarianism within the working class; however, with the partial exception of Belfast in the period before 1920, there are very few studies of the effect of sectarianism on the development of particular unions. My thesis is such a study; the unions concerned are those which organised in the Derry shirt industry between 1920 and 1968. I will use this case study to call into question the general validity of many of the

assertions which have been made about the relationship between sectarianism and trade unionism. It seems to me that the difficulty with these assertions is not simply that they are based on limited evidence, but that, particularly in the case of traditional Irish marxists, they are rooted in evolutionist and reductionist views of social reality. I will argue that to understand the effect of sectarianism on trade unionism it is necessary, first, to recognise that unions, as all other social institutions, are created and re-created by actual individuals and, second, to take account of the meanings which those individuals attach to their situations and the intentions which they ascribe to their actions.

This kind of approach involves an attempt to assess the causal significance of sectarianism as one factor among many. In identifying the factors which affected the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry I have been mindful not only of my respondents' recollections and experiences but also of studies of trade unionism and industrial relations in Britain. However, I do not systematically seek to examine my material in relation to mainstream British writing on trade unionism and industrial relations. First, because the problem with which I am concerned is not one which has exercised many British scholars. Second, because, much of the literature on trade unionism and industrial relations in Britain is based on theoretical assumptions which I do not share. Apart from empiricism, the most influential theory underpinning studies of British industrial relations is that elaborated by Dunlop (1958) and subsequently developed by Flanders (1965). Dunlop's theory of the 'industrial relations system' is based on Parsonian sociology, and Dunlop shares his mentor's tendency to reduce human agency to the mere enactment of rules. Following Dunlop, Flanders defined the study of industrial relations as 'the study of the institutions of job regulation' (1965: 10), and, as Hyman points out (1979: 13), this led to a strong tendency towards reification in the literature: a focus on the formal or institutionalised aspects of industrial relations to the exclusion of informal processes and concrete individuals. This began to change following the publication of the Royal Commission on Trade unions and Employers' Associations (Donovan, 1968) which highlighted the importance of informal

relationships in British industrial relations. And recently, as Watson (1988: 7) has noted, there has been a growing recognition of 'the need to pay more attention to the individuals who "people" the industrial relations system.' Thus, although I do not systematically seek to examine my material in relation to mainstream industrial relations theory, my approach is consistent with, and an addition to, an emerging school of thought within the discipline. Moreover, I have found a few debates about trade unionism in Britain especially illuminating - those relating to gender, union government, and breakaway unions, for example - and, when appropriate, I will seek to use my material to comment on these.

I have found it useful to make an analytical distinction between trade unionism and socialism and to divorce the question of the effect of sectarianism on trade unionism from the question of the production and reproduction of Northern Ireland's sectarian political system wherein most Protestant workers vote Unionist and most Catholic workers vote nationalist. In practice, however, several of the trade union officials whom I interviewed were also prominent labour politicians, and as part of my conclusions I will attempt to use the material presented in the course of this thesis to say something about the nature of sectarianism and about the relationship between Unionism, nationalism, socialism, and progressive politics in Northern Ireland.

CHAPTER 2: DERRY/LONDONDERRY AND ITS SHIRT INDUSTRY

2.1 Introduction

My thesis is first and foremost an anthropological contribution to a debate about sectarianism and trade unionism in Northern Ireland, but it also has an intrinsic historical value: Derry is not just another Northern Irish provincial town, it is Northern Ireland's second city and a place of considerable symbolic significance, and shirtmaking was, for many years, its staple industry. My purpose in this chapter is to locate my study of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry in time and space, as it were. Chronologically, my thesis is defined by the years 1920 and 1968; I did not choose these years arbitrarily: they were turning points in the history of Derry - indeed, of Ireland as a whole - and they delimit a specific period. In section 2.2 of this chapter I will explain the importance of the years 1920 and 1968 and describe relations between Derry's Protestant and Catholic communities during the years in between. In doing so I will show how the city came to have a symbolic significance, not just within Ireland but further afield. In the section 2.3 I will examine the origins and early development of the shirt industry and discuss its social and economic importance to the city. In section 2.4 I will present a preliminary analysis of the religious and political composition of the shirt industry.

Notwithstanding the argument of the previous chapter I will not attempt to discuss Derry society as it was produced and reproduced by concrete individuals. Rather I will identify some of the main institutional patterns of life in Derry, and discuss their form and how they relate one to another in abstraction from their production and reproduction. The discussion presented in this chapter, although it owes a lot to the knowledge I acquired during the time I spent living in Derry and to the conversations which I had with the people I met there, is - necessarily - based mainly on secondary sources and

my own study of local newspapers and government statistics. This mode of exposition is dictated by practical necessity: it would not be possible to discern the overall pattern of relations between Catholics and Protestants in Derry, or to trace the history of local politics or of the shirt industry on the basis of my sample of respondents (they were chosen because they were officials or activists in particular trade unions, not because they were representative of the different strands in local political opinion). However, it can be justified on theoretical grounds: in the previous chapter I argued that to begin to comprehend the question of the effect of sectarianism on trade unionism it was useful and valid to distinguish it from the question of the origins of sectarianism, and from the question of why Protestant and Catholic workers have tended to vote for socially conservative Unionist and nationalist parties rather than progressive socialist ones. Moreover, it is consistent with Giddens's (1979: 80 and 95) 'methodological tactic' of opting for 'institutional analysis' rather than 'strategic conduct.'

2.2 Doire, Derry, Londonderry

Several events combined to make 1920 a momentous year in the history of Derry and of Ireland. It was the year that the legislative framework for the partition of Ireland was introduced. It was the year when, for the first time, nationalists won control of Derry Corporation. And it was a year in which relations between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Derry degenerated to a point just short of civil war. Catholics had constituted a majority of the city's population since the middle of the nineteenth century: in 1871 there were 13,821 Catholics to 11,421 Protestants (Curran, 1986: 5), and in 1920 56.2% of the city's population was Catholic (Farrell, 1980: 24). Protestants had retained control of the Corporation until 1920 because the franchise was restricted to people who owned property valued at more than £10, and through a manipulation of electoral ward boundaries which was introduced in 1896 (Curran, 1986: 6). Irish nationalists won a majority of Council seats in 1920 because the election had been conducted under proportional

representation. By voting nationalist, the majority of the city's population had expressed a desire for the city to be part of what was to become known as the Free State. However, when partition came into effect in June 1921, Derry was included within the boundary of the new state of Northern Ireland; this was confirmed by the Boundary Commission in 1925.

In 1922 the Unionist dominated Parliament of Northern Ireland (later to become known as Stormont) abolished proportional representation, and in the next local government election, held in 1923, the exclusively Protestant Unionist Party regained control of the Corporation. The Party was to retain control until February 1969 despite an ever increasing Catholic majority; in 1950, for example, 62% of the city's population was Catholic (Hamilton, 1955: 45), today it is nearer 70% (Kettle, 12 July 1979). The means by which the Unionists retained control of the Corporation was a further change in the electoral wards - the infamous 'gerrymander.' In 1936 the number of wards was reduced from five to three: the North and Waterside Wards - with approximately 8,000 Unionist electors - sent 12 representatives to the Council, while the South Ward, - which contained more voters than the other two wards put together - returned only 8. The Northern Ireland Minister of Home Affairs described the situation (in a letter to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland) in the following way:

The Derry Unionists find increased difficulty... in getting suitable people returned to the Corporation and therefore they are promoting a scheme for the alteration of the wards and reducing the number of members... I have warned them that any publicity at the present time or speeches on the subject would only add to difficulties which I must always have in dealing with the alteration of wards where the two Parties are closely effective... if proper steps are taken now, I believe Derry can be saved for years to come. (Cited by Arthur, 1987: 48).

Evidently, Ulster Unionists had a keen desire to retain political control of Derry. This is linked to the city's symbolic importance. For Unionists the city is Londonderry, built and fortified by the companies of the City of London between 1609 and 1640, and settled by English and Scottish Protestants who in the siege of 1689 resisted the Catholic forces of James II and thus

played an important part in securing the success of the Protestant plantation of Ulster. The lifting of the siege - the Relief of Derry - is celebrated every year on the 12 August by the Apprentice Boys, an organisation similar to, and overlapping with, the Orange Order. As O'Brien (1974: 141) suggests, 'Northern Ireland lives a siege: the image of besieged Derry, with the promise of its deliverance, is a far more poignant symbol for it than the wilted glory of the Boyne.'

But Derry also has considerable significance for Irish nationalists. For them Derry originated not in the plantation of the seventeenth century but in a fifth century monastic settlement founded by St Columba and called Doire Columbcille (Derry is an anglicisation of Doire which means oak grove). However, Derry's significance for Irish nationalists is not so much the dispossession of the native Irish in the seventeenth century, but as, in the words of John Hume - the best known of the city's two current MPs,

the living symbol of what they perceived to be wrong in the Northern Ireland that was created in the 1920s, the place where the injustices of the unionist state were at their most blatant. (Foreword to Curran, 1986: 1).

For Catholics the injustice was manifold. Partition was resented not just because it excluded them from the Irish Free State to which they had given their allegiance and included them in a state of which they wanted no part but because of its perceived effect on the city's economy: the border separated Derry from the hinterland with which it had previously traded, and threw the city into 'an uneven competition with Belfast' (Arthur, 1987: 35; cf Curran, 1986: 8-9). Moreover, the Belfast based Unionist authorities were blamed for the subsequent lack of industrial development and high male unemployment in the area (see Curran, 1986: 8-9, and McCann, 1974: 21). In fact, the lack of male employing industries in Derry - the shirt industry employed mainly women - was a problem which pre-dated partition. According to Ireland Industrial and Agricultural (Department of Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1902: 418):

many of the [shirt] manufacturers complain that they cannot get a sufficient number of workers. This difficulty is to some extent inherent in the trade itself, for this reason - that considerably over 80 per cent of the persons engaged are females, and it is always difficult to get a large supply of female labour unless there is work in the neighbourhood for their male relatives. In this respect Derry compares very unfavourably with Belfast. Belfast is

indeed singularly fortunate, for whilst women and girls are employed in the linen trade, the males of the various families find occupation in the shipbuilding and allied trades. Derry, on the other hand, though there are shipyards and railway works, cannot provide work for many men.

However, although the lack of jobs for men cannot be attributed to partition, it is true that Derry's industrial position deteriorated in the 1920s: the shipyard shut down in 1924 making 2,000 men redundant (DS: 21 February 1919), and Watt's distillery closed in 1921 making 200 men redundant (DJ: 13 June 1921). It is also true that Derry fared badly under the Northern Ireland government's post-war policy of attracting new industries to the province. By 1966 217 new firms had been established in the province, but only 20 (9%) were located west of the river Bann, and only seven in Derry (Robinson 1967: chapter 5 passim, and Kettle, 12 July 1979). Of these seven firms the largest employers were Birmingham Sound Reproducers and DuPont; the latter is still in production, but the former closed in 1967 making 1,600 men redundant (DJ: 24 January 1967). Many of Derry's industrial difficulties can be attributed to its peripheral position (it is the most westerly city in the United Kingdom), but local nationalists believed that it was the result of a systematic policy to encourage Catholic emigration, 'thus helping to neutralise the natural increase in the potential Nationalist vote.' (Curran, 1986: 25).

Catholics resented Unionist domination of local government not just because it denied them power and was undemocratic, but because of the effects of the gerrymander on housing conditions. These two issues were inextricably linked. On the one hand the gerrymander of local government boundaries was contingent on a pre-existing pattern of religious segregation in housing. On the other hand, the maintenance of the gerrymander depended on the perpetuation of this pattern. Derry is bisected by the river Foyle. On the east bank is the Waterside, which, as I have already pointed out, is mainly Protestant. On the west bank of the river is the old walled city centre, the Bogside, Creggan estate, Fountain area, and the Northern suburbs. The latter developed as a mixed community, and together with the Fountain area - in which is housed an old established Protestant working class community - was constituted as the North

Ward after the 1936 electoral boundary change. The Bogside, situated just outside the city walls, was the first Catholic settlement to develop after the plantation, and formed the core of the South Ward after 1936; the Creggan estate, exclusively Catholic and adjacent to the Bogside, was built in the early 1950s and became part of the South Ward. Originally, religious segregation in housing 'reflected more the impact of history and geography than communal discord' (Murphy, 1981: 40). By this Murphy means that when Catholics began to migrate to Derry in the nineteenth century they were not permitted to live within the walled city, and the Bogside was convenient to County Donegal whence most of the migrants came. There was some communal disorder in Derry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - I shall examine several examples in the next chapter; but it true that Derry was much less prone to sectarian rioting than Belfast (Curran, 1986: 27). There is little doubt that the existing pattern of religious segregation in housing was perpetuated by the exigencies of the gerrymander. Certainly, it is true that the Corporation's house building programme did not meet the needs of the city's growing Catholic population, and that, by the 1950s, overcrowding in the Catholic South Ward of the city was intense (Robinson, 1967: 191, and Purdie, 1987: 18). It was widely believed by Catholics that the Corporation's housing policy was determined by the need to maintain the existing political balance in the city: to re-house the expanding Catholic population outside the South Ward would threaten the Unionist's electoral majority (see the Cameron Commission, 1969: para 139, and Curran, 1986: 21 and 59).

The Unionist electoral strategy was based not only on the residential segregation of Catholics and Protestants, but even more fundamentally on the assumption that the former always voted anti-Unionist and the latter Unionist. For the most part this assumption held true: Catholics voted for the Nationalist Party, and Protestants for the Unionist Party. However, the Nationalists shared the Unionist's assumption about voting behaviour: they canvassed only Catholics. McCann (1974: 11) describes his childhood experience as an election worker for Eddie McAteer - MP for Foyle 1953-1969 and leader of the Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland from 1958 - as follows:

Beside every name on the [electoral] register was either an

orange or a green mark. One was pleased to turn over a page with a preponderance of orange marks. Such pages were easily done. Orange marks denoted Protestants, and Mr McAteer did not send polling cards to Protestants.

Thus, Derry in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was characterised by political stalemate. In this situation Catholics saw little hope of remedying their grievances short of a united Ireland, and this became their political touch-stone. But McCann (1974: 188) and Curran (1986: 9) - both of whom grew up in Catholic Derry - describe a mood of hopelessness and impotence. The Nationalist Party responded to the abolition of proportional representation in 1922 by boycotting the Corporation; they returned in the early 1930s, and the Corporation became the main arena for the airing of Catholic grievances. Politics became parochial. Given the in-built Unionist majority of Corporation seats, the Nationalists had little chance of redress, and, consequently, the debates often degenerated into petty sectarian wrangles (see Purdie 1987: 6-7, and Murphy, 1981: xiv). According to McLenaghan (1985), the Nationalist Party in Derry was not, as scholars often suppose, an exclusively middle class Party, but its members were cautious about political tactics and conservative in their social outlook. Only twice did they try more militant forms of protest: on St Patrick's day in 1951 and 1952 they organised marches routed through the walled city; on both occasions the marches were blocked and dispersed by the police (Curran, 1986: 12).

There were forms of political life other than Unionism and nationalism in Derry during the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s; Sinn Fein and various brands of labourism were the main ones, but they were never strong enough to break the stalemate. In the summer of 1920 the IRA had attempted to extend their guerrilla war to Derry, but they had been out-gunned by the UVF and the British army (Murphy, 1981: 254-255). McCann (1974: 11) notes that there was always a residual sympathy for Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, in the Bogside, but, despite the failure of the Nationalist Party's tactics, Sinn Fein activists were unable to mobilise much electoral support. For example, In 1933 the sitting Nationalist MP for Foyle, Mr McCarroll, was challenged by Sinn Fein, but 'Mr McCarroll with the solid support of the Clergy had a comfortable victory' (McCann, 1974:

198). The Catholic Church was very influential in many aspects of Derry life (see Murphy, 1981: ix-xv), and was strongly supportive of the Nationalist Party; indeed conventions called to select candidates were usually chaired by the local parish priest (McCann, 1974: 12; see also Curran, 1986: 13). In 1956 the IRA resumed the 'armed struggle.' In the subsequent 'border campaign' several bombs were set-off in Derry, but the campaign evoked little response from the Catholic population, and it was called-off in 1962 (Curran, 1986: 15; McCann, 1974: 213; and Bell, 1979: 333). Socialists fared little better, but it is worth examining their political endeavours in more detail: several of them are among the leading protagonists in the history of trade unionism in the shirt industry.

The first labour candidates to contest elections in Derry were sponsored by the Derry Trades and Labour Council⁽¹⁾. The Trades Council was formed in 1887 by Catholic and Protestant tradesmen (Murphy, 1981: 172; see also DJ: 9 November 1886, 3 February 1905, and 4 March 1904). The most prominent member of the local labour movement in its formative years was a tailor by the name of James McCarron; as will become apparent (see chapter 3), he played a significant role in the first attempts to organise shirt workers. McCarron, like the other members of the Trades Council, placed a high value on the fact that the Council included Unionists and nationalists, Protestants and Catholics (DS: 22 September 1890), and was hesitant about engaging in municipal politics for fear that this unity be disrupted: for instance, during a discussion about the municipal election of 1896, McCarron intervened:

the labour movement...should be a power outside politics altogether. They should be a power within themselves, not knowing either politics or religion. (DJ: 9 November 1896).

Nevertheless, McCarron permitted himself to be nominated as a candidate; he claimed that,

I could have been selected as a Nationalist candidate, but I would never accept a seat from any political party and will represent workers irrespective of politics or religion (DJ: 20 November 1896).

McCarron was not successful in 1896, but he was elected as an alderman in 1901. He was joined by another member of the Trades Council in 1902. In 1905, the members of the Trades Council nominated one of their Protestant colleagues, Sam McGuinness, to

contest the predominantly Protestant East Ward. This election illustrates the kind of difficulty which was to beset subsequent attempts to secure secular labour representation in the Corporation. McCarron and Doherty faced strong pressure to sign the United Irish League (UIL) pledge, and McGuinness faced accusations of being a 'stooge' of a nationalist dominated Trades Council which wanted to split the Unionist vote (DJ: 4 January 1905). McCarron and Doherty expressed sympathy with UIL but refused to sign their pledge; McGuinness appealed to the electors as a 'as a worker and as a Unionist,' but failed to get elected; however, he said that he would stand again on the same principles and with the motto 'Derry and No Surrender!' (DJ: 18 January 1905). McGuinness was elected to the Corporation on a labour ticket in 1906 (McLennaghan 1985).

In the period after the Easter Rising in 1916, Derry Trades Council, like the ITUC, found it increasingly difficult to avoid becoming embroiled in the burgeoning national conflict, and the carefully constructed unity which characterised its early years fell by the way side. To be sure, the Trades Council, like the ITUC, distanced itself from Sinn Fein, the Easter Rising, and the subsequent struggle between the IRA and the British forces ⁽²⁾, but it opposed conscription in 1918 and supported the general strike in support of republican prisoners in 1919: in the eyes of Unionists it became identified with the nationalist cause (cf McCarthy 1977: chapter 2; Patterson 1980: 106, and see chapter 3 of this thesis). By 1925, however, the feeling in the Trades Council was that, in the words of one its members quoted in the Irishman (12 May 1928), 'the hatchet was buried between Orange and Green', and a new Labour Party was formed. According to the Irishman (ibid),

The idea of sending a Labour Group to the Derry City Council was conceived by the Trades and Labour Council about the end of 1925. From 1923 there had been no popular representation on this very important public body, the old Nationalist members refusing to take their seats after the gerrymandering of the city by the Northern Government whereby the majority of citizens were placed in a minority. For several years up till 1926 the representation of the city was solely in the hands of the property owning class.

The Party contested all wards in the 1926 elections: the candidates in the mainly Catholic wards were returned unopposed, but none were elected in the mainly Protestant wards. The 16 Labour members in the

Corporation were subject to intense criticism. The local Unionist paper, the Londonderry Sentinel, referred to them as 'Labour-Nationalists', a title which seemed to be confirmed when a leading member of the Party chaired an election meeting for the Nationalist Party Candidate in County Londonderry. On the other hand the local nationalist paper, the Derry Journal, referred to them as 'so-called' or 'fake' Labour and denounced those Labour councillors who attended a reception for the Duke of Abercorn, a member of the Unionist establishment (see also DJ: 18 October 1926). When the Nationalist Party returned to active politics in the early 1930s, none of the Labour councillors were re-elected.

The labour tradition was kept alive during the 1930s by a small group of workers and socialist intellectuals. In early 1940s two rival Labour Parties were formed. One was the Londonderry Labour Party (LDLP) which was affiliated to the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP). The LDLP, like the NILP, was neutral on the national question; however, although its leading members were Protestants, the LDLP was strongly opposed to the gerrymander^(a). The other was the Derry Labour Party (DLP), its leading members were Catholics and they articulated an anti-partitionist policy. Both Parties focused their activities around elections, but neither had much success. The chairman of the LDLP, Mitchel-Gordon, the son of a shirt manufacturer, contested the 1945 General election; according to one of my respondents, George Hamill, who was a member of the DLP at this time, 'he got a vote of 2,500, he was the only labour man in the British Isles in 1945 who lost his deposit.' In the June 1945 Stormont election Paddy Fox, chairman of the DLP, challenged the Nationalist candidate in the Foyle Constituency, and Willie Irwin, a leading member of the LDLP, challenged the Unionist candidate in the City Constituency. Neither was elected. Prior to the 1946 Council elections, Fox entered into an electoral pact with the Nationalist Party; he succeeded in being elected as a councillor, but the pact caused two prominent members of the DLP to defect to the LDLP. One was George Hamill, the other was Stephen McGonagle; both men are among the main protagonists in this study: the former was appointed as a full-time ATGWU official in 1950; the latter was appointed local NUTGW Branch secretary in 1947 and instigated the breakaway in 1952.

The NILP split in the late 1940s. Tensions had developed between Unionist and anti-partitionist members of the Party. Some of the anti-partitionists were expelled in 1948; the remainder left in 1949 when Party policy on the border changed from neutrality to support for the Union with Britain. The anti-partitionists formed a Northern Ireland section of the Eire-based Irish Labour Party (IrLP). McGonagle and Hamill left the LDLP and helped set up a Branch of the IrLP in Derry. The Branch contested Council elections in 1949, failed to get any members elected, and faded out. Thereafter, in the 1950s and 1960s, as a veteran labour activist told a friend in a letter dated 1 October 1962 (UCD p29a/158 (2)), there was no Labour Party in Derry,

just a small group that [Stephen] McGonagle mobilises at election time. There is no forward movement, nor does there appear to be any prospect for the future.

In 1958, and again in 1962, McGonagle challenged the Nationalist Party leader in the Foyle constituency; in 1958 he was defeated by 6,953 votes to 5,238 (LS: 22 March 1958) and in 1962 he was defeated by 8,720 votes to 5,476 (LS: 6 June 1962). A common story in Derry among people who remember these elections is that on polling day McAteer's election van toured the Bogside broadcasting the claim that 'the Protestants of Belmont are voting for McGonagle,' as McCann comments, this was 'enough to clinch the matter' (1974: 12). In the 1967 election Seamus Quinn, McGonagle's subordinate within the ITGWU, contested the Foyle Constituency; he too was defeated (he received 4,300 votes).

To sum up. Politics in Derry during the period between 1920 and 1960 were characterised by a political stalemate between Unionism and nationalism. Labour parties with varying religious compositions and policies on the border tried and failed to break the deadlock. Given the importance attached to electoral majorities in Derry, labour candidates were vulnerable to allegations of splitting the Unionist or nationalist vote. The various labour parties were also vulnerable to internal splits caused by differences arising from the salience of the national question. But these were not the only problems. Labour candidates were often faced by the allegation that they were communists. For example, George Hamill recalled an occasion when he and McGonagle stood on an LDLP ticket against Nationalist Party

candidates in the South Ward:

I never seen a more vitriolic, a more personal assassination as the [Derry] Journal carried out against the [LDLP] candidates just because they happened to be fighting the Nationalists. They accused us of all sorts of things from Marxists to Leninites to Trotskyites to having been subsidised by Moscow. It got that bad... that even my own father would sometimes hardly look at me!

Needless to say, these allegations were unfounded - the Communist Party of Ireland never had a branch in Derry - but they were very damaging: anti-communism was very potent in Ireland in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s; no less so in Derry. McCann, for example, writes (1974: 14):

It was not only in Ireland that the church was persecuted... The Hungarian rising of 1956 was seen as an attempt by the Hungarian people to end oppression of the church. Collections were taken up at masses... communism was seen as an international movement fanatically seeking to destroy the church. That, one gathered, was what communism was about... some of this one learned at home, alot of it at school. The church controlled our education.

Local newspapers record many occasions on which the Catholic Bishop warned workers against the dangers of communism and urged them to ensure that labour organisations were run on christian lines (see DJ: 5 July 1946, 2 May 1955, and 3 May 1957). Protestant church leaders also warned about the dangers of socialism (see DJ: 10 July 1946).

The political stalemate did, however, begin to breakdown in the 1960s, and, following a demonstration by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in Derry on 5 October 1968, the city became the 'crucible' (Purdie, 1987: 1) or 'main arena' (Curran, 1986: 55) of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). How did this small city in which politics had hitherto been characterised by stasis, conservatism, and parochialism become the main host for a new social movement? Several developments within Northern Ireland in the early 1960s combined to create a degree of common interest between Catholics and Protestants in Derry. First it became apparent that the industrial development plans outlined by the new Unionist Prime Minister, Terence O'Neill, favoured the east of the province rather than Derry and the north west. In 1964, came the news that two of Derry's rail links and two of its cross-channel ferries were to be closed down. Then, in 1965, the Lockwood Report recommended that the

New University of Ulster be located at Coleraine rather than Derry. Coleraine is a small, mainly Protestant, market town in County Londonderry which had no academic tradition. Derry is Northern Ireland's second city, and it already had a potential basis for a university in Magee College. Unionists and nationalists in Derry were equally aggrieved by this decision, and the Action Committee which was formed to combat it created an unprecedented degree of unity. The high point of the campaign was a 'motorcade' of some 25,000 people (Curran, 1986: 33) to Stormont led by Eddie McAteer and the Unionist Mayor in the latter's official car.

The University campaign failed, but it signalled the emergence of a new political strand in the Catholic community. It is best represented by John Hume who was the chairman of the 'University for Derry Action Committee.' Hume was teacher who had made a name for himself through the local Credit Union. Critical of the Nationalist Party, he was an advocate of what Curran (1986 p44) describes as 'the new notion' that,

social problems and the establishment of mutual civil rights for all the people of the North was a more practical path than the Nationalist insistence on the removal of the border, with the resolution of all other issues to be left until after reunification.

In fact, this was not a completely 'new notion' in the Catholic community; something like it had long been a central to the politics of labour men like Hamill, McGonagle, and Quinn. To be sure, McGonagle was more firmly located within the anti-partitionist camp than Hume, but in 1949 the former had told a meeting of the IrLP:

you are obsessed with the national question and think if the border was removed all things would be well. The Anti-Partition Party [ie the Nationalist Party] say they are not interested in economic matters, they have used sectarian catch-cries and have hardened the solidarity of Unionist workers. The Northern leadership of the Irish Labour Party is mainly presbyterian... you must not continually denounce the Northern Unionist working class... even if the border was removed you would still have your day to day problems. (DJ: 12 November 1949).

And during his 1958 election campaign against McAteer, McGonagle said,

if the border disappeared over night and the Unionists agreed to it we would be presented with problems far more serious than those existing at present. On the question of employment, it is not enough to denounce the border. (LS:

18 March 1958).

Nevertheless, whereas McGonagle lost to McAteer, Hume, in the Stormont election of 1969, won. What was the difference? This question can only be answered by reference to developments which took place in Derry between 1965 and 1969, but it is useful to note two contrasts. Firstly, Hume was not a socialist, and was not, unlike McGonagle, vulnerable to allegations of communism. Second, all of the writers who deal with the period stress that during the 1960s a new constituency emerged within the Catholic community: Catholics who, as a result of the 1947 Education Act, had received a University education were coming of age (Curran, 1986: 39; McCann, 1974: 15-17; Purdie, 1987: 6-7; and Arthur, 1987: 102-103).

During the three years after the University campaign, the initiative was siezed, not by moderates such as John Hume, but by left-wing activists (Purdie, 1987: 9). The pioneers of left-wing protest in Derry in the 1960s were young republicans: after the failure of the 'border campaign' 1956-1962, the mainstream of the republican movement had moved away from physical force towards agitation on social issues (see Bell, 1979: 339-342). The young republicans had some initial success with a campaign which focused on the issue of unemployment and Derry's industrial decline, but the campaign which attracted most attention and support was centred around the issue of housing. 'Derry Housing Action Committee' (DHAC), formed in 1967, was an alliance of young republicans and some members of the Derry Branch of the NILP. The latter is not to be confused with the older tradition of labourism represented by Hamill, McGonagle. As we have seen, these two men left the LDLP in 1949 because of its Unionist stance. The Derry Branch of the NILP ceased to function in the 1950s, and when it was re-established in 1965 McGonagle and Quinn did not re-join. The new Branch of the NILP had a more left-wing flavour than had previous labour groupings in Derry; Eamonn McCann, who returned to Derry early in 1968 after several years in London where he had become a member of the Trotskyist Irish Workers Group, was to become its most prominent activist. It was the members of the DHAC who invited the NICRA to march in Derry on 5 October 1968 (Curran, 1986: 79). Five thousand people defied a Government ban, and participated in the march. The police responded

violently (Cameron, 1969 para 229:14), and, later in the day, rioting ensued in the Bogside.

The success of the young radicals presents something of a paradox. Anti-communism was, as has been shown, potent in Derry, yet the members of the DHAC articulated, what Purdie (1987: 26) describes as, a 'quasi-marxist' rhetoric. The movement for civil rights was presented in the language of class struggle: Protestant and Catholic workers were urged to unite against toryism, 'orange' and 'green,' North and South. Purdie (1987 passim) has illuminated this apparent paradox in a number of ways. He argues that there was never very many left-wing activists, and that their impact was out of all proportion to their numbers because they found new methods of protest which caught the imagination of a much larger group. Despite their militant rhetoric, the young socialists were merely echoing long standing grievances among Derry Catholics, and the main target of their criticism was the traditional target of the Unionist-led Council. Moreover, the left-wing ideas of the DHAC did not go unnoticed: its original chairman had been forced to resign following allegations made by a Nationalist councillor about communist influence on the Committee (see also DJ: 2 April and 19 November 1968). And, shortly after the 5th October demonstration, the moderates grouped around John Hume regained the initiative from the radicals. This was achieved through the formation of the Derry Citizens Action Committee (DCAC); Curran (1986: 85) explains:

The new situation presented all the leaders with a large and looming problem - how to harness the energies and enthusiasm of the people in a disciplined manner. Unless the growing spirit of the movement could be harnessed coherently, mob rule would replace Unionist minority rule. Clear leadership was essential, and quickly... Eamonn McCann - who had presided [over the meeting at which the DCAC was established] - refused to accept membership of the Committee, and then publicly casitgated it as 'the kiss of death for the developing radical movement in Derry, middle class, middle aged, and middle of the road'.

In the months which followed the 5th October, the DCAC organised a series of demonstrations. Their biggest success was on 15 November when 15,000-20,000 people marched peacefully through the walled city. This was a symbolic victory: not only had marches within the city walls been banned by the Home Secretary, William Craig, but only

Protestants had been permitted to march there in the past. At the end of November O'Neill, the Unionist Prime Minister, made a number of concessions to the protestors: Craig was sacked, and, more importantly, the hated Derry Corporation was suspended. In response, NICRA and DCAC 'decided to give O'Neill one last chance and they declared a "truce" for one month without marches or demonstrations' (NICRA, 1979: 15). The truce lasted until 1 January 1969 when the Peoples Democracy - a student organisation whose leaders, including Michael Farrell and Bernadette Devlin, shared the same ideas as the Derry young socialists - set out on a march from Belfast to Derry. As the organisers expected, the marchers were attacked by extreme loyalists en route, and their arrival in Derry triggered a police riot in the Bogside. According to Curran (1986: 108):

this was the weekend which finally shattered Protestant-Catholic relations in Derry, and crystallized the mutual hostility between the police and the Catholic community.

Sporadic rioting continued throughout 1969, and on the 12 August the annual procession of Apprentice Boys was attacked by Catholic youths. A full-scale battle between police and rioters developed in the Bogside. It continued through the night and into the next day; the rioters were getting the upper hand. Then, at five o'clock on the 13 August 1969, British soldiers were deployed on the streets of Derry; 'at the time', Curran writes (1986: 35), 'it seemed like an end, but it really was a beginning.'

In actual fact, it was both an end and a beginning: the end of one era and the beginning of another. I will not attempt to examine developments in Derry since August 1969: they are not directly relevant to my thesis, and are so fraught with controversy as to defy any hasty analysis. However, it is worth delineating some of the main changes which set off the period 1920-1968 from the one which followed. One of the dominant features of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s has been armed conflict, and Derry has suffered the consequences more than most other places. The main parties to this conflict have been the various state security forces and the IRA. The latter is not just a military organisation; it has become a potent political force. Yet Derry remains a nationalist, rather than a republican, city: the majority of its inhabitants vote for the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) which supplanted the old

Nationalist Party. There has also been a re-alignment in Unionist politics. The Unionist Party fragmented in the wake of the CRM, the suspension of Stormont, and the imposition of Direct Rule from Westminster. The Protestant vote is now divided between the Official Unionist Party and Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party.

Since 1968 there has been an attempt to reform Northern Ireland's sectarian social structures. The efficacy of reformist policy is disputed (eg O'Dowd et al, 1980). However, in the case of Derry there have been some successes. Perhaps the most notable success has been in housing, but it is also worth pointing out that local government is more democratic: in 1973 proportional representation was introduced for local elections, and since then Derry City Council has been controlled by the SDLP. In other respects reform has failed. Many of the new firms which were attracted to Derry in the early 1970s did not survive the economic recession, and male unemployment remains very high. Moreover, Protestants and Catholics in Derry are more divided than ever before. As John Darby (1983: 9) remarks,

it seems likely that more than 2,000 deaths, including a number directly resulting from violence between Catholics and Protestants, could not but have affected relationships between the two communities.

One of my sample of respondents, George Hamill, recalled his youth and contrasted it with the present in the following way:

The religious thing, it was in the Guildhall [ie the Corporation] where you had the clashes of the two Parties and the domination of the Unionist Party; with regard to any jobs going down there for Catholics, it was just a stone wall... There weren't a bitterness that's grown up with this [recent] trouble and the separation [of the two communities]. The part of town I was reared in was a good [religious] mixture, and half my play mates and chaps I knocked about with was of a different religion to my own and any question of bitterness never occurred to us... Some of them [Protestants] were not any better off than ourselves. I knocked about with a Protestant chap, and he must have been idle for about 10 years... they had a better chance, a Protestant chap, of getting in somewhere with [ie if they had] influence... It was difficult for a Protestant chap to do, especially if the Protestant chap had nothing to do with the Orange Lodge, or the powers that be, or the masonic, he [was] a bit ostracized too.

The 'separation' to which George Hamill refers is a physical separation which has become even more marked than before: Protestants

have tended to leave their homes in the city and move to the Waterside, and Catholics have moved in the other direction (Kettle, 12 July 1979).

The intensification of communal divisions has meant that although socialism no longer attracts the calumny which it once did⁽⁴⁾ left-wing politics have become even more marginal than before. Finally, it is worth pointing out that although Derry is no longer controlled by the Unionist Party and although most Protestants now live on the Waterside, the city has retained its symbolic importance for many Unionists⁽⁵⁾.

2.3 The Origins of the Shirt Industry in Derry

I will begin this section by tracing the origins and early development of shirtmaking in Derry. I will then examine some of the reasons which have been given to explain Derry's initial pre-eminence as the main centre of the shirt industry in the United Kingdom. Lastly, I will give some consideration to the significance of the industry to the social and economic life of the city.

The origins and early development of the Derry shirt industry have been much studied (see Scott, 1928; Slade, 1937; Hamilton, 1955; and Grew, 1987). It is generally agreed that the manufacture of ready-made shirts was initiated by William Scott, a Derry born linen weaver. Scott began making shirts for a Glasgow wholesaler in 1831. His work force was the immediate members of his family. As demand for his shirts increased, Scott began to employ seamstresses in Derry and in the surrounding rural area to assemble shirts in their own homes. This method of production proved effective, and Scott established outstations in County Donegal and County Londonderry for the distribution of materials to homeworkers and the collection of finished garments. In the 1840s a number of entrepreneurs, mostly Scottish, set up agencies and outstations for the manufacture of shirts in and around Derry; some of these were the wholesalers to whom Scott had originally sold his shirts, and they were presumably

attracted to Derry by Scott's success (Grew, 1987: 35). By 1845 there were approximately 500 female outworkers in Counties Donegal, Londonderry, and Tyrone (Grew, 1987: 1).

As the outworking system became established, manufacturers built premises in Derry where the cloth was cut and got ready for distribution to outstations. This tendency towards centralisation intensified following the introduction of the sewing machine in 1856, and several of the Scottish entrepreneurs erected large factory premises in and around the city centre in the late nineteenth century. But the introduction of the sewing machine did not immediately result in a complete switch from domestic to factory production. To be sure, the numbers employed in factory premises increased, but so too did the number of outworkers: in 1876 the former numbered between 4,000 and 5,000, and the latter between 12,000 and 15,000 (Grew, 1987: 1). Several tasks in the assembly of shirts which could not be adequately performed by machines in factory premises remained in the hands of outworkers, but by the turn of the century outworking was in decline, and by 1920 there were very few outworkers (Hamilton, 1955: 16). Grew lists a number of reasons for the increasing concentration of shirtmaking in factory premises located in Derry. One reason was improvements in sewing machine technology; for example, button holing was one task which the early machines could not do adequately. Another was that with increasing competition in the shirt trade the time taken to complete orders became increasingly important, and it took longer to have shirts made by outworkers than it did to produce them in the factory (Grew, 1987: 245). A third reason was a shift in fashion from white to coloured shirts. The white shirt was stitched and laundered in the factory, but assembly was completed by outworkers; with the coloured shirt all processes could be carried out in the factory (Grew, 1987: 244-245). By 1914 there were 26 factories in the city (Grew, 1987: 41, Table No. 32).

Since the introduction and refinement of the sewing machine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the shirt production process has undergone many changes. For the most part, these changes have not been due to innovation in the machinery used.

Rather, they have been the result of reorganisations in work methods and extensions in the division of labour (cf Coyle, 1982: 11). Thus, prior to the automation of some processes in the late 1970s and 1980s, the most significant changes in the shirt production process followed the introduction of conveyor belts in the 1930s and the advent of work study in the late 1940s and 1950s. I will discuss these and other changes in the production process in detail in chapters four and five of this thesis; for the moment, it is worth pointing out that conveyor belts and work study techniques were only deployed in factories owned by firms manufacturing shirts on a large scale.

Scholars who have attempted to trace the development of the Derry shirt industry have immediately run up against a problem: a dearth of information (see Grew, 1987: 1-8). Most serious from my point of view is the absence of a series of consistent figures for the numbers employed in Derry shirt factories during the period with which I am concerned. The figures published in official reports of population censuses are limited in two ways: successive reports classify garment workers in different ways; and they refer only to shirt workers resident in the city, and therefore exclude workers resident in County Donegal. These constituted up to 15% of the workforce in some factories until the Safeguarding of Employment Act (Northern Ireland) of 1947 imposed restrictions (Hamilton, 1955: 32). Shirt manufacturers did not themselves publish employment statistics. An exception is the figures cited by Grew for 1896 according to which there was 619 men and 11,662 women employed by Derry based firms (1987: 43, Table No. 34; see Table 1 in appendix 2 of this thesis). The Boundary Commissioners of 1925 '6' were also struck by the dearth of statistics relating to the Derry shirt industry; the chairman of the Londonderry Shirt Manufacturers' Federation (SMF; founded in 1913), Mr R. P. Harrison, was asked about it, he replied: 'we are very provincial... we like keeping our business to ourselves.' He added that official statistics could not be trusted: 'the Board of Trade used to collect statistics, but there was no compulsion and you could not depend on them.' Nevertheless, Harrison was prepared to tell the Boundary Commission that 8,000 people - '10 per cent' of whom were male - were employed in Derry's 30 shirt factories in 1925

and up to '15 per cent' more during World War One. These figures are probably inflated: Hamilton (1955: 17-18) notes that the 1924 Census of Production indicates that Derry factories employed only 4,600.

Shirt production was adversely affected by the general economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s though not so much as other industries (DJ: 19 May 1926). Employment was at a lower level than it had been during World War One or was to become in the 1940s. The manager of Londonderry Labour Exchange told the Derry Journal (2 January 1933) that 'atleast 4,000 girls and women found continuous employment' during 1932. But he added that there had been more 'short-time' working in 1932 than there had been in 1931, and that many employers preferred this system to laying off a proportion of the workforce. Short-time working was not restricted to recessions: demand for shirts was seasonal, and my respondents told me that during the slack season - January/ February and August/September - it was common for workers to be put on short-time even in 'good' years. According to the Garment Worker (GW: February 1934), 1933 was the best year industrially for atleast five years [in Derry]. This is due entirely to the improvement in the shirt trade in which 200 men and 5,000 women are at present employed in Derry City alone.

No figures are available for the numbers employed in Derry's factories in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but, the workforce certainly increased to meet the demands of the armed forces in World War Two⁷⁷. Expansion continued throughout the war and was sustained afterwards: employment in the industry reached a peak in 1951, when, 7,252 workers were employed in 30 factories (Hamilton, 1955: 27). The industry experienced a 'short, sharp recession' in 1951 (Hamilton, 1955: 18); thereafter shirt manufacture in Derry has been in a secular decline. By 1961 six factories had closed and the workforce was down to 5,000 (Guckian, 1963). In 1971, 5,000 workers still found employment in approximately 25 factories (Belfast and Northern Ireland Directory), but this was a boom year for the industry (LS: 2 June 1971). In the early 1980s between 2,000 and 3,000 workers were employed in 13-15 factories (see also Londonderry Teachers' centre and North West Archaeological and Historical Society, 1979: 64).

In 1871 the 2,229 operatives employed in Derry's 16 factories constituted 'the greatest concentration of hands in the shirt and collar industry of the United Kingdom' (Grew, 1987: 114). In 1948, Derry shared this position with Manchester: each city contained 21% of the total number of shirt workers in the United Kingdom; the second largest concentration of shirt workers was in London which had 16% of the total (Hamilton, 1955: 41-42). I now want to consider some of the factors underlying Derry's position as the main centre of shirt production in the United Kingdom.

A market for ready-made shirts first developed in the early nineteenth century; prior to that they were made as required within the household of the wearer (Hamilton, 1987: 6)⁽⁸⁾. According to Grew (1987: 35), William Scott was not the first

to recognise the potential demand for the ready-made shirt. He was, however, possibly the first to introduce the production of this garment to Ireland.

Slade, Hamilton, and Grew more or less agree on the factors which gave Derry an early lead in shirtmaking. First, the growing demand for ready-made shirts coincided with the demise of linen spinning and weaving as a domestic industry ⁽⁹⁾ in the rural areas of the north west of Ireland and the consequent unemployment of a large number of women. Second, many women in the north west had acquired stitching skills through their involvement in the 'sprigging' industry - the sewing of patterns onto muslin; it too began to decline in the mid-nineteenth century. It has been claimed (see Hamilton, 1955: 7 and Slade, 1937: para 1.1.4) that the local water gave white shirts a singular finish, but Grew points out that local manufacturers only began to launder shirts in 1901; prior to that they had been laundered in England and Scotland (1987: 204).

As has been shown, the local industry expanded rapidly after the introduction of the sewing machine. But the sewing machine was also available for use by manufacturers elsewhere; and, indeed, Grew and Hamilton note that during the 1880s and 1890s Derry lost its markets in Australia, North America, the East and West Indies because of local competition and the introduction of tariffs in those countries. Nevertheless, Derry prevailed against competition in what became its main market, the United Kingdom and the British Empire (Harrison told

the Boundary Commission that 98% of shirts produced in Derry were sold in Britain and its colonies, and in 1950, according to Hamilton (1955: 39), 89% of shirts made in Northern Ireland were sold in Britain, Hamilton: 1955: 39). The major factor which enabled Derry manufacturers to prevail against their competitors in Britain was that wages were lower in Derry. Grew writes (1987: 120):

Wages earned in the shirt and underclothing industry of Ireland in 1906 were lower than those received in England and Scotland... the low wages accepted by the skilled Irish female population was an important contributory factor in the successful establishment and development of the shirt industry in this country.

From 1914 minimum wages in the Northern Ireland shirt industry were determined by the Shirtmaking Trade board, and after 1945 by the Shirtmaking Wages Council (Northern Ireland); nevertheless, the wages paid to Northern Irish shirt workers were to remain significantly lower than shirt workers in the rest of the United Kingdom. In 1915, following representations from the SMF, the Shirtmaking Trade Board cut minimum wage rates in the Irish shirt industry and thereby instituted a wage differential between Britain and Ireland. The employers' argument was that the wage differential would offset the the cost of transporting finished garments to British markets, and thus enable local manufacturers to hold their own against competitors in Britain who were not burdened with transport costs. For example, when Mr R. P. Harrison was asked during his interview with the Boundary Commission in 1925, 'are wages [in the shirt industry] deliberately fixed to counter balance the cost of transport?' he replied:

Yes, what happened was when the Trade Board was formed we, of course, put up our cost. We were handicapped with these extra charges. We finally got an understanding and a ¼d an hour less was granted to us, and later increased to ½d an hour for women, 1d for men. It was recognised that with the competition we had to meet it was necessary for us to get consideration... our Trade Board met just before the war... I fancy it [the allowance to the SMF] was in 1915.

The wage differential, and the reasoning which underlay it, persisted throughout the period covered in this thesis. It remained a long standing grievance among Derry shirt workers - for example, it caused the 1920 strike - and I will discuss it further in subsequent chapters, but, for the moment, it is sufficient to note that Harrison told the Boundary Commission that the Trade Board's decision was 'a

very extraordinary thing', that the shirt workforce accepted the wage cut only 'after a great deal of trouble', and that even now, in 1925, they were still trying to 'wipe away' the differential with Britain.

The main cause of the decline in the Derry shirt industry in the late 1950s and 1960s seems to have been the importation to Britain of cheaper shirts made in Third World countries, particularly Hong Kong. Wages in Derry were lower than British standards, but the wages paid to shirtmakers in Hong Kong were lower still (Guckian, 1963: *passim*; GW: July 1963). Another aspect of the decline of Derry as the centre for shirt production was the location and re-location of units of production in rural areas of Counties Londonderry and Down. This trend could be discerned in the 1950s: Hamilton (1955: 43) notes that in 1930 only 8% of Northern Ireland's shirt workforce was employed in areas outside Derry and Belfast; in 1951 the figure was 16.6%. The trend continued into the 1960s (GW: December 1964).

To conclude this section I want to give some consideration to the economic, social, and cultural significance of the shirt industry to Derry. Some of the employment figures mentioned above can be used to give an indication of its economic importance: in 1951 when the population of Derry was less than 50,000 the shirt industry was employing more than 7,000 people; according to Hamilton (1955: 44), the shirt workforce constituted approximately 33% of the total number of economically 'occupied' persons in the city. Indeed, several scholars have suggested a correlation between the growth of the city's population in the late nineteenth century and the expansion of the shirt industry. Grew notes (1987: 126) that in 1864, a shirt manufacturer commented on the 'large importation of female labour to Derry.' Hamilton (1955: 21-22) points out that Derry's population grew rapidly during the years of the famine, from 15,196 in 1841 to 19,727 in 1851; increased more slowly between 1851 and 1861; and increased by 4,000 per decade between 1861 and 1891 - the period when the shirt industry was becoming increasingly centralised in Derry. According to Grew (1987: 126-127) most of the migrants came from Donegal and most were female; for example, the census report for 1911 enumerates 4,122 female migrants and only 1,779 males.

The economic, social, and cultural significance of the shirt industry was heightened because of the chronic shortage of jobs for men in Derry. According to the figures mentioned above, and all estimates, only about 10% of the shirt workforce was male. In the last section it was shown that even in 1902 the shortage of jobs for men in Derry was evident to commentators; that male unemployment became even more of a problem during the inter-war period following the closure of two of the city's largest employers of men - shipbuilding and distilling; and that comparatively few new industries located in Derry during the 1950s and 1960s. The contrast between the large female workforce in the shirt industry and the lack of jobs for men did not pass unnoticed by social observers of various kinds, and it came to be widely believed that in Derry women were the family breadwinners and that their unemployed husbands looked after the home and the children.

In 1925 a member of the Boundary Commission asked the shirt manufacturers' representative, Mr R. P. Harrison, the following question:

It is rather difficult to make out where the men of Derry find employment. You say there are 8,000 persons in the factories. We arrive at 800 men out of 8,000. With the shipbuilding industry which employed 1,200-2,000 men closed down, where do men get employment here. Are their families supported by the earnings of the woman?

Mr Harrison replied:

Certainly, to an extent. There is carting and engineering and all that sort of thing.

After 1945 the notion that it was common in Derry for women working in the shirt industry to be the main family breadwinner and for their unemployed husbands to be responsible for child care and housework was promulgated by several authors. A good example is an article by Woodrow Wyatt in the Picture Post (17 December 1955). The subject of the article is the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland, something which Wyatt saw as an anomaly in comparison to the relatively full employment in other regions of the United Kingdom. A large section of the article is devoted to Derry:

There was not only hopelessness in the air, there was fear. After unemployment benefit has run out you must switch to the National Assistance Board... in Londonderry they are tough... it can be cut if the authorities think they are not looking for work hard enough. But... there are no jobs

to be had... In many families the wife has a few hours work to do a day. The husband stays at home puts on an apron and does the cooking and the housework, cleans and baths the children.

He tried to interview some of these 'housewife men' for television, but they were 'alarmed'; one said, 'if my face appeared in a picture the public assistance people would cut me off because I am not eligible for work when I'm looking after the home.' One of the pictures used to illustrate the article showed a young woman:

the only breadwinner in S. Holden's house... his unmarried daughter... has worked since she was 14. In this situation it is hard for a father to keep his dignity.

Further publications in which the theme of role-reversal in Derry is stressed include: the Economist (7 January 1964), Jackson (1979, first edition 1971), and Fraser (1979). Jackson suggests that the situation resulted in an 'embryo matriarchy', an erosion of 'the traditional dominance of the male', and that the rioting in Derry in the late 1960s was, in part, an expression of Derry men's need to assert their masculinity (1979: 5). The idea was also incorporated into local anti-Unionist ideology: according to a republican critique of a report by the Equal Opportunities Commission (AP/RN: 19 November 1984),

The report does not mention once the effects on Nationalist women and their families of sectarian discrimination, the essential prop that has maintained British domination of the six counties. For example, the report omits to point out that the recent redundancies among women in the clothing industry have had particularly severe consequences in Nationalist Derry, where women working as cheap labour in the shirt factories have traditionally been the main breadwinners because of the chronic high unemployment among Nationalist men.

However, the theme of role-reversal finds its most popular and sentimental expression in a song written by a Derry born song writer in the 1970s:

In the early morning the shirt factory horn
Called women from Creggan, the Moor and the Bog
While the men on the dole played a mother's role
Fed the children and then trained the Dog
(Coulter/Mews Music: no date).

To sum up. In the late nineteenth century Derry emerged as the major centre for shirt and collar manufacture in the United Kingdom. Scholars have given a number of reasons for the city's pre-eminence

in this industry, but, from my point of view, the most important one is that wages were lower than elsewhere in Britain. Throughout the period covered in this thesis, a remarkably high proportion of the city's working population was employed in shirtmaking, and the industry was of enormous importance to the local economy. Over 90% of the shirt workforce was female, and this, together with the fact that jobs for men were scarce in Derry, gave rise to a popular belief that in many local families it was the women, working the shirt industry, who were the main breadwinners and the unemployed men who took responsibility for house work and child care. I will explore this belief further in chapter four.

2.4 The Religious and Political Composition of the Shirt Industry

My purpose in this section is simply to trace the patterns of religious affiliation among employers and employees in the Derry shirt industry; however, to do this it is first necessary to take a closer look at factory ownership. In what follows, and throughout my thesis, I refer to two firms by pseudonym, these are: 'McCarthy and Company' (McCarthy's) and 'Harrison and Company' (Harrison's). I have done so to preserve the anonymity of respondents who worked in, and were prominently associated with, the factories owned by these firms. Many shirt factories in Derry were customarily called after their original owner or owners and this designation continued even after a change in ownership; for example, Harrison's was still known as Harrison's even after it became part of the British Cotton Mills Trust in the 1960s, and McCarthy's is still referred to as 'McCarthy's' even though it is now owned by large British-based transnational company. For the sake of consistency, when referring to the original owners of these two factories I use the pseudonyms 'Mr McCarthy' and 'Mr Harrison.' Customary appellations were also based on factory locations; for example, the factory which was established by A. B. Grant was named after the area in which it was located: Rosemount; similarly the Ebrington factory, built by Young and Rochester, got its name from a nearby street. According to Messenger (1981: 222-223) the customary names of Belfast's linen

mills followed the same two principles, original ownership and location. In Derry, however, there was another kind of customary appellation: some factories were called after the brand of shirts and/or collars which were made in them; examples include the Black Bear factory, and the Star factory.

The pioneers of the factory production of shirts in Derry were William Tillie, Peter McIntyre, Mr J. J. McCarthy, and David Harrison. The factories established by these men were to remain among the largest employers in the Derry shirt industry until the 1970s. In 1886 there were approximately 16 factories. Tillie and Henderson employed 4,522; McIntyre, Hogg, and Marsh 2,442; McCarthy 2,350; and Harrison 486. Of the remaining 12 manufacturers one employed 495, 5 employed between 200 and 400, and 3 between 100 and 200 (these figures include outworkers and factory operatives, see Table 1, appendix 2). According to Hamilton (1955: 27) of the 30 factories in production in Derry in 1951, 1 employed 900 workers, 5 employed more than 500, 2 employed between 350 and 400, and 6 employed more than 200; the remaining 16 employed less than 200. Hamilton writes that he took no account of an additional, unspecified, number of factories which employed less than 15; these tended to have an ephemeral existence: they closed down in a recession and re-opened when demand increased. He does not name individual factories, but I can state, on the basis of respondents' recollections, that the six firms which he mentions as employing upwards of 500 workers included those established by William Tillie, Peter McIntyre, J.J. McCarthy, and David Harrison; the other two were probably the Ebrington factory, and Desmond and Co. On the question of the ownership of factories in production in 1951, Hamilton writes that approximately 50% were owned by Derrymen,

but since these are generally the smaller ones they employ about 25% of the total [number] engaged in the industry in the city... the rest [of the factories], which include all the biggest factories but one, are under the control of large English or Scottish limited liability companies. They generally have a head office in Glasgow, Lancashire, or London. Thus... 75% of the industry (in terms of employment) is directed by GB [i.e. from Great Britain]... This is not a recent development, from the beginning the Scotsmen were the original visionaries, the shareholders, the directors, and the brains behind the industry. The Irish, in the main, provided only the workers. (1955: 29).

The last sentence has an unfortunate tone, but an examination of the company records of several of the shirt firms in Derry tends to support Hamilton's assertion about ownership and control: Tillie and Henderson; McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh; and Young and Rochester all became limited liability companies in 1908; McCarthy's became a limited liability company in 1911 (see PRONI T.3377/1, and Companies Registration Office files: 97,241, 96,651, and 113,864). Nevertheless, it would seem that many of Derry's shirtmaking companies - large and small - retained something of the character of family firms well into the twentieth century. For example, the immediate descendants of William Tillie retained control of Tillie and Henderson until 1926 (PRONI T.337/1); an immediate member of the McCarthy family retained a significant interest in McCarthy's until his death in 1967, and a Mr Morrish, whose father had married into the McCarthy family, was chairman of the company until 1962 (McCarthy's and Company, 1972, and Companies Registration Office file: 113,864); the grand nephew of Mr R. P. Harrison was managing director of Harrison's until the early 1960's; Desmond's was, and still is, owned and by members of the Desmond family (LS: 9 July 1969); and a smaller, but well known firm, Hamilton and Sons was managed by the great grandson of the founder until the mid 1980s. In the 1950s and 1960s most of the old established firms were gradually acquired by large, British based, transnational clothing and textile companies (GW: April 1965). McCarthy's, and Harrison's, were taken over by the Viyella group in 1968; Viyella acquired the Ebrington factory in 1971 (AP/RN 26 November 1981); and, McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh, and Company is now part of the Tootal group.

Most shirt manufacturers were Protestants. Certainly, of those firms which employed more than 500 in 1951, only one was owned by Catholic family, that was Desmond's. Historically, however, the commitment of shirt manufacturers to local Unionism was uneven. Most of the original pioneers of factory production were, as we have seen, Scottish. They were Presbyterians who did not easily fit into the mainly Episcopalian and land-owning ruling class of late nineteenth century Derry. In the 1860s they supported an evangelical brand of Presbyterianism and helped to establish a Presbyterian City Mission. Religious opposition to Episcopalianism became political opposition

to toryism: members of the Mission were instrumental in the formation of a Liberal Party in Derry in 1865, and in the development of an electoral alliance with local Catholics. The alliance was successful for a time, but began to breakdown in the 1870s (Murphy, 1981: 112-128). Nevertheless, David Harrison of Harrison and Company stood as a Liberal candidate in Derry in the 1880 general election, and as the Home Rule candidate in the 1913 general election (Murphy, 1981: 128 and 179). The Derry Journal (9 November 1908, cited in Grew, 1987: 166) noted that shirt manufacturers had been criticised for not subscribing to the Londonderry Unionist Association, and that they had been described as 'squatters and settlers' and 'rotten Presbyterians', traditionally a 'rotten prod' is one who defaults from the Unionist position.

Despite this early radicalism, all but a few small shirt firms owned by local Catholics were conforming to the Unionist position by 1925. This is clearly revealed in the SMF's submission to the Boundary Commission. The SMF's written statement expressed alarm at any suggestion of interference with the boundary of County Londonderry so as to remove the city from the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland to that of the Free State. The statement was signed by the 25 firms listed in Table 2 (appendix 2), and followed the appearance of Mr R. P. Harrison (son of the Harrison who had been a Home Rule candidate in 1913) and Mr J. J. McCarthy as witnesses before the Commission. Both men also made individual written statements. Mr R. P. Harrison argued that his concern with the boundary was an expression of his business interests rather than of his religion or politics: he refused to respond to representations to the Boundary Commission made by nationalists because these were,

almost exclusively confined to the religious and political aspects of the question. In common with other shirt and collar manufacturers I am interested in my particular business... I state... that any such transfer [of Derry into the Free State] would not only seriously interfere with that industry, but probably drive it out of Ireland entirely.

However, when he was cross questioned, Harrison - notwithstanding a claim that 'he did not go into politics at all' - admitted that only one member of the SMF was nationalist and that most of the other members were Unionist; he explained that, 'the great majority of the

employers are of the Unionist persuasion.' Only five shirt manufacturers gave evidence to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Derry Nationalist Registration Society. One of these, James Sweeney, employed 350 workers; the others employed between 20 and 40 (1926, PRONI MIC 288 Reel 12).

The political allegiances of Derry shirt manufacturers in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s are obscure: never again did they collectively identify themselves with the Unionist position as in 1925. One potentially illuminating source is the minutes of the SMF, but my attempts to gain access to these were frustrated⁽¹⁰⁾. However, it would seem that although few manufacturers engaged directly in local politics, they retained a broadly Protestant and Unionist identity throughout the period - they were certainly perceived as such by my respondents. The few who were involved in local politics tended to be local Protestants who owned smaller factories; men like James Hamilton, W. J. Little, S. Kennedy, Mr Swann (Belfast and Northern Ireland directory 1935, 1944, 1949, and 1953; see also the recollections of Seamus Quinn in chapter 4 of this thesis). Of the larger manufacturers, only Mr McCarthy seems to have been politically active: he was an alderman in the Unionist East ward in the 1930s. The members of the SMF elected their first Catholic chairman, Mr Guckian, in the late 1960s (LS: 21 August 1968). He was succeeded by another Catholic, Mr J. F. Desmond the managing director of the largest of the locally owned shirt firms (LS: 31 December 1969). Without access to the minutes of the SMF, it is unclear whether any significance should be attached to this development: Seamus Quinn, local organiser of the ITGWU in the 1950s and 1960s told me,

I wouldn't read anything into that... Guckian was a kind of Unionist anyhow, and the Desmonds were half and half - one or two of them were great McAteer supporters when it suited them.

Nor, incidently, can it be interpreted as evidence to support the traditional Irish marxist argument according to which the influx of foreign multinational capital to Northern Ireland in the 1960s led to the displacement of 'old', mainly Protestant, 'Ulster industrial families' by a 'new class of managers' (Farrell, 1980: 329; cf Hall, 1979: 8-10 and O'Dowd, 1980b: 63). When the Viyella group acquired a

number of Derry shirt firms in the late 1960s the existing directors and senior managers were not simply made redundant. Harrison's was amalgamated with another local shirt firm - James Burnside Ltd - to produce a single brand name in two separate factories, one in Derry and one in Magherafelt; Arthur Harrison remained the manager of the Derry factory, but left in the early 1970s because he did not like working under the new regime. However, The son of the founder of James Burnside Ltd became managing director of the two factories. In the case of McCarthy's the existing - all Protestant - senior management were retained to manage the Derry factory'''. These developments took place after the period with which I am concerned and are, therefore, not directly relevant to my thesis. Rather than explore them further, I now want to examine the religious affiliations of the people employed in the Derry shirt industry.

There are no available statistics on the religious composition of the shirt workforce in Derry between 1920 and 1968: after the 1911 census none has tabulated occupation and religion such that the relevant figures can be extracted. In the 1901 and 1911 censuses the religious affiliations of people in each of the various occupational categories are tabulated, but these are only of limited use from the point of view of this thesis because, first, 'seamstresses' are included with female 'shirtmakers'; second, and more importantly, shirt workers who worked in the city's factories but who lived outside the city are not counted. Thus Table 3 and Table 4, which detail the religious affiliations of male and female shirtmakers and seamstresses in 1901 and 1911, are only a rough guide to the religious composition of the shirt factory workforce in Derry. However, the figures suggest that Protestant men and Catholic women were over-represented in the Derry shirt industry, and, conversely, that Catholic men and Protestant women were under-represented. At the 1911 census, for example, Protestants of all denominations (Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Methodist) made up 43.8% of Derry's total population (Farrell, 1980: viii), yet 65% of male shirt workers, and only 32% of female shirt workers, were Protestants. Catholics comprised 56.2% of Derry's total population, but 67% of female shirt workers, and only 32% of male shirt workers, were Catholic.

What kind of workers would have been included in the census categories of male and female 'shirtmaker'? Large shirt factories were each divided into separate departments each of which dealt with a different type of garment (some factories produced pyjamas and underclothing as well as shirts and collars); a different type of fabric; or a different stage of the production process, for example shirt cutting, shirt assembly, finishing (laundering, pressing, folding), and inspection (see The North of Ireland (Illustrated) Up-to-date. Londonderry, N.D. c1900: 17-18, and Grew, 1987: 110). Each department had its own manager. Judging from my respondents' recollections, most department managers were men^{'12'}. Aside from the latter, the only significant concentration of male shirt workers were those involved in shirt cutting; most other jobs were done by women. I will examine the sexual division of labour in the Derry shirt industry much more closely in chapter five; for the moment I am concerned with the religious division of labour, and wish only to point out that the figures in Tables 3 and 4 suggest that Protestants predominated in management and shirt cutting, and Catholics in shirt assembly and finishing.

I do not wish to anticipate the finding of my own research, but it is important to point out at this stage that my respondents' recollections indicate that the pattern whereby Protestants predominated in the cutting room and in management, and Catholics in shirt assembly and finishing was perpetuated throughout the period covered by this thesis. Moreover, they suggest another form of religious segregation: between factories. Many of my respondents - Protestants as well as Catholics - identified McCarthy's and the Ebrington factory as 'Protestant factories' in the sense that their workforces were mainly of that religion; several respondents added Hamilton's and Little's to the list. Some respondents also identified several factories as employing mainly Catholic workforces - particularly Tillie and Henderson's and Rosemount. However, the tendency to identify factories as 'Catholic' was less marked than was the case with 'Protestant factories'; this seems to reflect the fact that, in an industry which employed mainly Catholics, the latter were the exception. It was, and still is, not uncommon for factories in Northern Ireland to be identified with one or other community: Gibbon

(1975: 80) and Morgan (1978: 30-32) describe a similar situation in the Belfast linen industry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Barritt and Carter (1972: 100-104) found several examples in the 1960s. The latter also note that in some factories with a mixed workforce Catholics and Protestants were segregated into different departments. Several instances of this kind of segregation were mentioned by my respondents, and are suggested by newspaper reports of particular events - these will be discussed where appropriate in the text. Morgan (1978: 30-32) suggests that the different female trades in the linen industry were divided up on a religious basis. Although, as I have already pointed out, there was a tendency for Protestant men to be over-represented in shirt cutting, I found no evidence that the different 'trades' involved in shirt assembly and finishing were divided up in a similar way - several respondents specifically told me that, in their experience at least, there was no such tendency.

2.5 Conclusion

The years 1920 and 1968 were both watersheds in the history of Derry, and indeed of Ireland. In 1920, the legislative framework for the division of Ireland was introduced, and Derry - despite the wishes of the Catholic majority of its population - was included within the jurisdiction of the new state of Northern Ireland. In 1968 the Unionist regime which had been established in 1920 began to crumble, and it was on the streets of Derry that mass opposition to government policies first emerged.

For most of the period between 1920 and 1968, life in Derry was characterised by economic and political stagnation. The Unionist minority revealed a deep seated desire to retain political control of the city, and the nationalists were unable to effectively challenge minority rule. It was a stalemate, and local politics assumed a parochial form in which petty communal issues came to the fore. The Catholic sense of injustice was fueled by poor housing and a shortage of jobs for men. In this context the shirt industry, Derry's only

large scale manufacturing industry, assumed enormous importance; so much so that it was widely believed that female shirt workers were the main family breadwinners in the city.

By 1955 most of the largest shirt manufacturing firms were owned as limited liability companies with their main headquarters in England or Scotland. However, many of these firms remained under the control of their founders' descendants well into the twentieth century. These men were, in the main, Protestants, and, although few of them engaged overtly in Unionist Party politics, they were not generally regarded as politically neutral. Both statistical and oral sources indicate that Protestants were over-represented among managers and among shirt cutters. Both jobs were mainly done by men and were, as will be shown, better paid than the other jobs in the shirt industry most of which were done by women. Catholics predominated among the latter.

CHAPTER 3: THE EARLY HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM AND THE STRIKE OF 1920

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the history of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry from the 1880s to the mid 1920s. The sources relating to this period are few and uneven in quality. The main ones used here are local newspapers, especially the Derry Journal and the Londonderry Sentinel; the annual reports and monthly Journal of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses; the monthly Journal of the United Garment Workers' Union, (The Garment Worker)^{'1'}; and the records of the Registrar of Friendly Societies in Dublin. I was able to trace only two respondents who were involved with trade unionism in the shirt industry during the years under consideration, and their experience relates only to the latter part of the period; that is, to the early 1920s.

Despite this dearth of information it is possible to piece together the following pattern of development. The early history of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry conforms, in its main outlines, to the pattern identified by historians of the labour movement in Belfast and elsewhere: the organisation of women workers lagged a long way behind that of the men in the industry. The local newspapers rarely mention the men's organisation, but the Registrar of Friendly Societies in Dublin lists the Londonderry Shirt, Collar, and Underclothing Cutters' Union as having been registered as a trade union in 1890. Unfortunately neither its original registration documents, nor its response to the registrar's annual request for information about its membership and accounts have survived, but the list of files held in the Registry indicate that the Londonderry Cutters' Union had a continuous existence until 1915 when it amalgamated with the Shirt and Collar Cutters' Union of Ireland (files No 114 and 255T in the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Dublin; see also Devine, 1986: 97). The latter union amalgamated

with the British based United Garment Workers' Union (UGW) in 1919 (GW: July 1926). In contrast, women shirt workers were not successfully organised until 1917/1918 when more than 3,000 of them joined a 'Female Factory Workers' Branch' of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses (ASTT; see Table 5, appendix 2).

It would seem, moreover, that the women found it more difficult than the men to organise: the local newspapers report a series of failed organisations prior to 1917/18. The first organisation catering for women shirt workers, established c1891 and initially known as the Female Labourers' Union (DJ: 18 November 1891), did not attract many members, and did not survive the nineteenth century: it was not mentioned in newspaper reports of strikes in two of Derry's largest shirt factories in 1904 and 1905 (DJ: 3 February 1904 and 8 December 1905). In 1906, a Branch of the Textile Operatives' Society of Ireland - a union which organised female linen workers in Belfast - was established in Derry following a public meeting addressed by the union's organiser, Mary Gallway (Grew, 1987: 223; see also DJ: 10, 17, and 24 August 1906). During the first year of its existence, the Branch affiliated to the Women's Trade Union League and to the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW); Mary McCarthur, the secretary of the former organisation and the founder of the latter held a number of meetings in Derry in 1907 (DJ: 24 and 26 July 1907). However, Grew (1987: 223) suggests that no more than one-seventh of the total factory workforce joined the union, and it was not listed among affiliates of the NFWW in 1910 (Annual Reports of the Women's Trade Union League 1907, 1908, and 1910²²). And, in August 1917, a leading local trade unionist is reported to have told the ITUC, which held its annual meeting in Derry in that year, that all male workers in the city were now organised but the women were not (DJ: 10 August 1917).

Nevertheless, by 1919, it would seem that trade unionism had become firmly established in the shirt industry: between 200 and 300 male shirt cutters were members of the UGW (LS: 15 June 1920), and 3,352 women shirtmakers were members of the ASTT (see Table 5, appendix 2); however, this pattern of organisation was not to last. In the summer of 1920 the shirt cutters struck for wage parity with

British shirt cutters. The strike lasted for 10 weeks during which time relations between the UGW and the ASTT deteriorated and the industrial conflict became embroiled in the struggle between Unionists and nationalists in the city. After the strike trade unionism in the shirt industry fragmented. The permutations were as follows: the ASTT lost all but 200 of its members in Derry (see Table 6, appendix 2); up to 3,000 women joined the UGW; 'several hundred women' (DJ: 27 August 1920) joined the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU); and the UGW lost some of its male members to the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU). It had taken three decades for the Derry Branches of the UGW and ASTT to develop, but no sooner had they become established than they were split asunder.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first, section 3.2, deals with the development of trade unionism in the shirt industry in the years prior to 1920; I am unable to say more than I have already said about the organisation of men, so the focus is on the women. The second, section 3.3, deals with the 1920 strike; the third, section 3.4, with its aftermath. In each of these sections I will attempt to pursue the question which lies at the heart of my thesis: to what extent and in what ways was the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry influenced by sectarian divisions within the workforce? However, as will become apparent, the results are uneven: the dearth of information prevents one from adequately identifying the causal significance of sectarianism in the early history of trade unionism. This is particularly true for the decades before 1920, a period for which it proved impossible to trace any living veterans. But it also applies - all be it to a lesser extent - to my analysis of the 1920 strike and its aftermath. The recollections of the two participants in the strike whom I interviewed are extremely valuable and illuminate much, but they are limited in various ways which will become apparent, and it was not possible to trace any other veterans: most were dead at the time when I conducted my research. These are additional reasons (additional, that is, to those discussed in the last chapter) why I have defined my thesis in relation to the period after 1920.

However, the available evidence is sufficient for me to pursue two other aspects of my project, namely, the critique of current theories about trade unionism in Northern Ireland - especially traditional Irish marxism - and the argument about the necessity for social analysts and historians to recognise the importance of human action, intention, and meaning. Thus, in section 3.2 of this chapter I will compare the evidence relating to the organisation of women shirt workers with some of the historical generalisations made by Rolston (1980) and Munck (1986), and in section 3.3 I will question Desmond Greaves' (1982) analysis of the shirt cutters' strike; Greaves is another major exponent of the traditional Irish marxist perspective. In all three sections I will be concerned to illustrate the dangers and difficulties inherent in attempts - whether made by marxists like Greaves or non-marxists such as Murphy (1981) - to infer actors' intentions and meanings from the structure of situations in the absence of appropriate forms of evidence. Another purpose underlying this chapter is simply to provide the reader with the knowledge necessary for a full understanding of subsequent chapters: many of the ramifications of the 1920 debacle were felt, and alluded to, by the later generation of trade unionists from whom I drew most of my sample of respondents.

3.2 Trade Unionism in the Derry Shirt Industry 1889-1919

Above, it was shown that the development of trade unionism among women shirtmakers lagged a long way behind that among male shirt cutters. This is a similar pattern to that identified by historians of the Belfast labour movement. Traditional Irish marxists have argued that the development of trade unionism among unskilled workers and women linen workers was inhibited by sectarianism; in this section I will explore whether the arguments which they adduce are relevant in the case of Derry shirt workers. The arguments were discussed in detail in chapter one but I will repeat them for the sake of clarity. Sectarianism is said to have worked against the unionisation of unskilled and women workers in two ways. First, it is argued that the organisation of unskilled and female workers was

inhibited by what is variously described as the 'contempt', 'exclusivism', or 'indifference' of the skilled tradesmen who constituted the trade union movement in Belfast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rolston (1980: 72) and Munck (1986: 86) stress that most organised skilled workers were Protestants and that many of the unskilled and women were Catholics, and imply that sectarianism played a part in the 'contempt' of the former for the latter. However, lacking the necessary evidence, and mindful of the kind of analysis offered by Patterson (1980: 30-31, and 1984: 175) and Reid (1980: passim), they concede that the 'contempt' may have expressed 'sexism' or routine trade union sectionalism. Nevertheless, both authors claim that irrespective of the meaning behind the 'contempt' of the skilled towards the unskilled, 'the effect of exclusivist practices (whatever their origin) was felt predominantly by one section of the working class [ie Catholics]' (Munck, 1986: 86), and resulted in the development of, in Rolston's words (1980: 72), 'Sectarian Trade Unionism.' The second argument made by traditional Irish marxists is that sectarian divisions within particular workforces undermined solidarity. For example, Munck (1986: 86) argues,

where there is little disagreement is on the fact that trade union organisation was thwarted by sectarianism. A prime case of this was the linen mills, where a mixed workforce proved remarkably difficult to organise right into the twentieth century.

I will now consider the case of Derry shirt workers in the light of each of these arguments starting with the first.

The development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry was not - unlike the case of trade unionism among Belfast linen workers - inhibited by indifference on the part of the leaders of the trade union movement. On the contrary, the first attempt to organise shirt workers seems to have been initiated by the local trade union establishment as represented by the Trades Council. At a meeting of the Council held at the beginning of 1889, the delegates decided to adopt similar principles for the organisation of shirt factory workers as those adopted by London Trades Council in the organisation of women match workers (DJ: 1 February 1889). And in 1891 the members of Derry Trades Council helped to arrange a visit to the city by Eleanor Aveling (Karl Marx's daughter). The purpose of her visit

seems to have been to reconstitute the pre-existing Female Labourers' Union as part of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers; she also addressed a public meeting which it was hoped would encourage more shirt workers to join the organisation. At the public meeting Mrs Aveling specifically commended the local Trades Council for helping women factory workers to organise and contrasted it to the lack of help extended by Trades Councils and skilled workers in Britain to women and to unskilled workers (DJ: 2 November 1891). According to the Derry Journal, it was also members of the Trades Council who invited Mary McArthur of the NFWW to organise in Derry (DJ: 24, 26 and 29 July 1907, and Grew, 1987: 223).

Derry Trades Council was, as we have seen, formed in 1887. Like Belfast Trades Council it was composed exclusively of skilled men who were members of the smaller craft societies (cf Patterson, 1980: 24); newspaper reports of the time mention bricklayers/masons, tailors, bakers, coach builders, cabinet-makers, railway workers, carpenters, painters, boot-makers, plumbers, plasterers, and engineers. The bakers and some of the masons/bricklayers were members of Irish based organisations, but the rest were members of British ('amalgamated') trade unions, or purely local associations (see DJ: 1 February 1889 and 22 September 1890). What, then, was the difference between Derry Trades Council and Belfast Trades Council which apparently made the former more helpful in relation to the organisation of female factory workers than the latter? It is difficult to answer this question without having at least had access to the Derry Trades Council's minutes for the period. But it is worth reiterating the point that, in this period, Derry Trades Council included Protestants and Catholics, Unionists and nationalists; contrasting it to Belfast Trades Council the members of which were, in Patterson's words (1980: 26), 'staunchly Unionist'; and asking the question: was the apparently more sympathetic attitude of the members of Derry Trades Council towards the organisation of women shirtmakers linked to the fact that many of them shared the Catholic religion, and a nationalist political outlook?

The local trade union leader who took most to with the organisation of shirt factory workers between 1889 and 1917 was James

McCarron. McCarron was, to remind the reader, the first chairman of the Trades Council; he was a Catholic and, though a self professed nationalist, was one of the small number of labour members of the Corporation^(a). His concern for the organisation of shirt factory workers is evident in the work which he carried out on their behalf. Indeed, he seems to have been concerned with the conditions of unskilled and unorganised workers in general: during the 1896 election campaign he highlighted the difference between labourers' wages in Derry and Belfast, and stressed the need for them to combine so that they could negotiate

a fair days pay for a fair days work... true political economy involves employers trying to get as much work as possible for their money against workers trying to get as much pay as possible...Live and let live, employers were a class they were bound to respect and support if they treated workers fairly. (DJ: 20 November 1896).

The available sources do not permit one to establish a connection between McCarron's religious and political affiliations and his efforts on behalf of the women shirt workers. What can be stated is that it is possible to trace something of the craftsman's frustration with unskilled and unorganised workers in a comment which he made about Eleanor Aveling's speech in Derry. He expressed doubt that she had received the full information about unskilled workers in Derry; told her that, 'it was no use speaking to the unskilled labourers in Derry' because they had joined unions in the past and deserted them after they had gained their demands; and singled out the Knights of Labour, a militant organisation of unskilled labourers in Derry, for special criticism (DJ: 20 November 1891). McCarron was the local secretary of the ASTT, and as such had been prosecuted for his alleged involvement in the intimidation of blacklegs during a dispute with local tailoring establishments in 1890 (DS: 2, 23, and 26 May 1890, and 1 October 1890). But the ASTT was a conservative organisation, composed exclusively of handicraft tailors, which attempted to protect its members' craft interests against the application of mass production techniques to the clothing industry (Stewart and Hunter, 1964: 15). To this end, the ASTT refused to recruit workers in British clothing factories until 1913 at the earliest. And, although Derry shirt factory workers posed no direct threat to local tailors, this craft exclusiveness may explain why

McCarron - despite his evident concern for the organisation of factory workers - did not encourage them to join his union until 1913.

However, once the ASTT Executive decided to admit clothing workers employed in factories into their organisation, McCarron seems to have been exceptionally successful: female ASTT membership in the British Isles increased by 7,852 in 1917, 3,154 of these new members were in Derry (Annual report of the ASTT, 1917: 4 and 81; also see Table 5, appendix 2). In 1933, Agnes Flynn, a retired ASTT notable in England recalled:

The workers in Londonderry were organised by the late James McCarron, and a splendid Branch of over 4,000 female workers was formed... the loss of Mr Lynch and Mr McCarron, who went down in the topedoe Leinster [A cross-channel ferry sunk by a German submarine] in 1918 was a blow from which our organisation in Ireland has never recovered and was a cruel blow to myself (GW: March 1933).

McCarron was helped in the organisation of women factory workers by another nationalist tailor, Con Doherty. According to the latter's obituary (Journal of the ASTT June 1924):

It was for his activities in the Labour movement, in which he took a leading part, being prominently associated with the late Alderman McCarron in organising the factory workers, he was best known. He was president of the local Branch connected with the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses, on behalf of which he rendered valuable service... A Nationalist who remained faithful to the constitutional policy, he was for many years a member of the Derry Corporation, and had the respect and confidence of all the members.

In accordance with the policy decided upon following the abolition of P.R. he did not seek re-election in January 1923, but there being no nominations for the ward for which he sat he was one of the Nationalists deemed to be re-elected. He did not, however, take his seat, but while his health permitted he continued to serve on the committees of management of the Asylum and of the City Infirmary. He was also an active member of the Local Employment Committee...

Thus, while it is possible to detect in McCarron's utterances and behaviour something of the exclusiveness common to craftsmen of the period, neither he, nor other trade union leaders can be said to have been indifferent to women shirt workers. But, if the development of trade unionism in the shirt industry at the turn of the century was not inhibited by neglect on the part of the trade

union establishment, was it undermined by sectarian divisions within the workforce itself? According to Murphy, the answer is yes; he writes (1981: 173):

The main obstacle to the growth of unionism was the attitude of the shirt-factory girls who constituted the bulk of the local labour force. Eleanor Aveling had stated the problem clearly in her rallies but had achieved little progress. Class deference in the factories supplemented religious divisions and in times of acute political excitement in 1883 and in 1899 this led to sectarian conflict between different workforces. Paradoxically acute sectarian tension in the labour force co-existed with toleration on the part of management toward an extended function in the factories for the local Catholic clergy who were extremely active in protecting the moral/social outlook of rural immigrants by setting up in the workplace sodalities and other educational clubs. The feeling of solidarity conveyed by these societies heightened the sense of corporate identity among workforces in the shirt factories and made it easier for employers to resist the first onslaught of trade unionism in the 1890s.

There is some evidence of 'sectarian tension' among shirt workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and there was 'sectarian conflict' in 1883 and 1899. On the former occasion 1,000 of Tillie and Henderson's 'factory girls' struck for three days when Marshall Tillie, the managing director, refused a demand by machinists in the shirt department - 'the vast majority of whom are Roman Catholics' (DS: 5 November 1883) - to replace the factory doctor. The strikers wanted the doctor replaced because he had voted against the Corporation allowing the Lord Mayor of Dublin to hold a National League rally in a municipal hall. The strikers were reported to have attacked the police, a Salvation Army hall, a soldier walking on the bridge, Jury's Hotel, and several private houses. The Derry Standard described these incidents as, 'one of the most extraordinary manifestations of the party spirit [occasioned] in Derry by the visit of Lord Mayor Dawson' (DS: 8 November 1883). In August 1899, following the Relief of Derry celebrations, there was a confrontation between some women who worked in McCarthy's - who we can safely assume were Protestants - and others who worked in Tillie and Henderson (Grew, 1987: 170). August seems to have been a particularly tense time and Grew (1987: 37, Table No. 28) notes that there were minor clashes in various shirt factories in 1877, 1880, 1900, and 1913.

Attempting to infer the meanings of events or the attitudes of actors from the structure of situations is a risky matter in any case, but for Murphy to write that sectarian 'attitudes', 'feelings', or 'sense[s]' constituted 'the main obstacle to the growth of unionism' in the shirt industry on the sole basis of these relatively few and isolated incidents of sectarian conflict is pure speculation. The only link which can be established between the phenomenon of sectarianism among shirt workers and attempts to unionise them is a remark attributed to Eleanor Aveling in the local press. But Eleanor Aveling did not, in Murphy's words, 'state the problem clearly in her rallies.' All that she did was to warn workers against attempts by employers to exploit party and religious prejudice, and express some, unspecified, criticism of the clergy (DJ: 20 November 1891). It is true that Aveling's speech evoked a strong response in the local newspapers; for example, one correspondent expressed indignation that the Catholic women of Derry did not leave the rally when the Pope and the Catholic Church were criticised for dividing the workers (DS: 20 November 1891, and DJ: 25 November 1891). For its part, the Trades Council stood by Aveling's description of conditions in the factories, but they clearly regarded an anti-clerical statement made at the rally by another speaker, Mr Farren, as potentially damaging: they held another public meeting for the purposes of condemning and disassociating themselves from his remarks, and making it clear, once again, that the Trades Council was composed of 'all classes and creeds' and that political and religious issues had never been brought before the Trades Council from its inception (DJ: 4 and 7 December 1891). All this suggests that local trade unionists perceived sectarian divisions as a potential threat to their efforts to organise shirt workers; it cannot, however, be used as evidence that sectarianism was the main factor which caused them to fail.

Indeed Aveling's speech, and the reaction to it by shirt manufacturers and others, is more significant as a clue to what may have been a more serious obstacle to trade unionism: employer hostility. Although it was not reported in the papers, it seems that Aveling accused a foreman mechanic who worked in Sinclair's factory of spying on those women who were members of the union, and quoted him as saying that 'he would break the back of the union in Derry.'

This came to light only because the foreman against whom the allegation was made, Dan Frew, wrote to the Derry Journal to deny the accusation of spying, and to deny that he had made the comment which Aveling had attributed to him. He admitted, however, that he had advised workers in his own, and other, factories against joining the union, and boasted that he had prevented more workers from joining the society than it presently had as members (DJ: 25 November 1891). Other attacks on Aveling were published in the local press: William Tillie claimed that wages in Derry were higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom, and an article in the Derry Standard defended the system of fines levied in many of the city's factories by arguing that the money collected went to a medical fund for shirt workers. The latter article ended by congratulating local employers for not 'resorting to the sweating system of the East End of London', claiming that employers and employees in Derry had hitherto enjoyed good relations, and attacking Aveling as an 'outsider' who was not wanted in Derry.

To sum up. Women shirt workers in Derry, like their counterparts in the Belfast linen industry, seem to have experienced considerable difficulty in sustaining trade union organisation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But, in contrast to what traditional Irish marxists have written about the labour movement in Belfast, Derry Trades Council was heterogeneous in its religious and political composition, and its members cannot be described as indifferent to the organisation of unskilled and female workers. The two local trade unionists most prominently associated with the organisation of women shirt workers, McCarron and Doherty, were, in common with the majority of the women, Catholics and nationalists, but existing sources do not enable one to establish shared religious and political identity as the causal factor which differentiated Derry from Belfast. Moreover, McCarron, despite his evident concern for the organisation of shirt workers, reveals something of the exclusivism common among craft unionists of the time. Neither is it possible to assert with any degree of certainty that early attempts to unionise the shirt factories were frustrated by the prevalence of sectarian feeling among the women themselves. All that can be said is that local trade unionists seem to have regarded sectarian

antagonism among shirt workers as a potential threat to union organisation in 1891. However, it is worth pointing out that reports of the establishment of a Textile Operatives Society in Derry in 1906 contain no reference to the subject. One factor which may have inhibited the organisation of women for which there is some evidence is employer hostility.

Irrespective of the difficulties which female shirt workers may or may not have experienced in the formation of trade unions, I have firm documentary and oral evidence, to be presented in the next section, that both of the two unions which had, by 1920, attracted a significant membership in the factories, the UGW and ASTT, included Protestants and Catholics, Unionists and nationalists. And before leaving this section it is worth noting two further pieces of documentary evidence. The first is a 'Female Organisation Report' published in the Journal of the ASTT in June 1918 which suggests that sectarian differences were less of a problem in the unionisation of women shirt workers in Derry than they were in the Belfast clothing industry:

Having successfully steered Derry through the arbitration for the 15 per cent. increase and bonus, I started in Belfast to help strengthen organisation there. Belfast is particularly difficult from the view of organisation: in spite of the great wave in favour of trade unionism the women here are slow to take advantage of the position. This is largely due to the feeling of distrust of each other, created and fostered in the past; however, there are signs of improvement in this respect. Some of the women are beginning to realise that the employers do not engage them for their particular or individual religious or political view, but because he makes a profit out of their labour. This has been made more clear than ever to them since August 1914, when the war started, and in consequence the cost of living has repeatedly increased, without bringing any general increase in wages in its train commensurate to the increased prices of the necessities of life, and certainly no voluntary increase from employers, although they were not slow to increase the articles in price that they were engaged in making. In this respect the dressmakers found themselves very severely handicapped.

The second is a tribute to James McCarron published in the Derry Journal (14 October 1918), which, if it is possible to judge from tributes paid to a dead person, suggests that he had won the respect of the local Unionist establishment. For example, Sir Robert Anderson, Lord Mayor of Derry and hosiery manufacturer, attended

McCarron's funeral and is quoted as saying that, although he did his utmost to help the workers, he was reasonable and had won the confidence of employers. Such goodwill across the sectarian divide and between trade unionists and employers in the city's clothing industry was to become, as will be shown in the next section, an increasingly scarce commodity in the next two years.

3.3 The Derry Shirt Cutters' Strike

This section is ordered according to two main purposes. The first is simply to provide an account of an unusual and historically significant event in the development of trade unionism among shirt workers. The 1920 strike is unusual because it was the only industry-wide strike and the only sustained conflict between workers and employers in the history of shirt production in Derry. Between 1872 and 1913 there were, according to Grew (1987: 215-219), only two strikes in the Derry shirt industry which lasted more than a week: one in which cutters in McCarthy's factory held-out against the introduction of piecework through September and October 1906; in the other, 36 sewing machinists in Tillie and Henderson's resisted a wage-cut for four weeks in November 1907. Neither strike was successful. Between 1921 and 1968 there were - judging from my respondents' recollections and the various documentary sources - only two strikes of more than a few days duration; both involved the issue of union recognition and were part of an ongoing inter-union rivalry, and both will be examined in detail in later chapters. The 1920 strike is historically significant because its consequences - the fragmentation of the ASTT and UGW - have reverberated down to the present day: to understand the consequences it is necessary to understand the course of the strike.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the protagonists in the 1920 strike became embroiled in the conflict between Unionism and nationalism in the city. My second purpose, therefore, is to examine the role of religious and political differences and prejudices in the dispute. Desmond Greaves, an Irish

marxist of the old school, has commented on the relationship between industrial and political conflict in Derry during the summer of 1920, and I will organise my account around a critique of his analysis. Greaves (1982: 279-280) presents the cutters' strike in the context of,

the growing isolation of Unionism... the Unionist position was being... rapidly eroded. Protestant workers in milling, malting and timber working were benefiting from national settlements in which the ITGWU was the driving force... The effect of this work was to galvanise other unions into action. When a shirt-cutters' strike took place in Derry and the leadership proved ineffective the workers turned to Paeder O'Donnell. Sectarianism was at an ebb and Labour morale was at its highest since 1907 [when Larkin, the founder of the ITGWU led a strike by Protestant and Catholic dockers and carters in Belfast]... at this point the reactionaries took alarm.

In Greaves' mind, the reactionaries became alarmed because in the course of the strike a mainly Protestant group of workers was being radicalised: O'Donnell, a former school teacher from the Irish-speaking area of Donegal who had been appointed Ulster organiser for the ITGWU in the autumn of 1918, was a socialist republican in the Connolly mould and a leading member of the IRA in the north west of Ireland. Greaves details an instance in which two 'reactionary' organisations, 'the Ulster Workers' Union' and the 'Ulster Protestant and Unionist Workers' Association' (Greaves refers to these as the 'yellow' union and 'yellow' Labour Party respectively) sought to break a strike led by O'Donnell and involving Protestant and Catholic workers in Fulton's blanket factory in Caledon; then he continues (1982: 280-281):

Within a few days sectarian riots turned the city of Derry into a shambles. The orgy of rioting and murder, which put a stop to all business for nearly a week, was instigated by the 'yellow' Labour Party under the pretext of defending Protestant ex-service men from Catholics who had taken their jobs.

He also mentions that (1982: 283)

The ITGWU was singled out for attention by all the forces of reaction... An advertisement placed in the Derry edition of the Belfast Telegraph by the Ulster Unionist Labour Association urged all Protestant workers to refuse to have anything to do with the ITGWU, 'which preaches republicanism', and to join their amalgamated [ie British based] unions.

The three main agents in Greaves' account of the strike are: the strikers themselves, O'Donnell and the local labour movement, and the Unionist 'reactionaries'. I will analyse each of these groups and attempt - insofar as my sources of information permit - to identify who they were and to discern the reasons underlying their behaviour. Apart from the usual sources - local newspapers and the Journal of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses - I have at my disposal the recollections of two participants in the strike. One is Paeder O'Donnell; the other is John McCorkell. O'Donnell needs no further introduction, but it is worth saying something about the nature of my interview with him. O'Donnell died in 1986; I interviewed him in 1983 when he was 90 years old. My interview with him was less intensive than with other respondents: because of his age I did not want to tax him. O'Donnell was both a leading socialist in the republican movement in the 1930s and an Irish literary figure; as such, he was much in demand as a public speaker and had been interviewed many times. I found that his memory of his time as a union official in Derry in the early 1920s was dim - perhaps because, as will become apparent in the next section, he was not altogether happy about his role - and that he preferred to talk about other episodes; happier episodes which he had also talked about on the two occasions I heard him speak in public. Nevertheless, what little O'Donnell had to say about the 1920 strike is, as I hope will be apparent, very valuable. John McCorkell is a Protestant who was born in Donegal. In 1920 he was a 15 year-old apprentice in McIntyre, Hogg and Marsh's 'City' factory. He remembers the strike clearly, but his recollections of trade unionism in the period after 1924 are more vague: he left Derry c1924 to work in a shirt factory in Warrington, returned for a year or so while his mother was ill, and left 'for good' c1927. He subsequently worked in various factories in the west of Scotland where he was eventually appointed a full-time official in the NUTGW⁽⁴⁾.

I will begin with an examination of the strikers, but, for the sake of clarity, it is first necessary to draw attention to the most glaring empirical flaw in Greaves' analysis. It is a matter of chronology: the inter-communal violence which, in Greaves' words, 'turned Derry into a shambles' - up to 40 people were killed - began

almost two months before the start of the cutters' strike, not after it as he implies. The cutters' strike began on Monday 14 June 1920. According to Murphy (1981) and McCann (1974) sectarian rioting began in Derry in mid April 1920, continued through May when the first fatalities were recorded, and climaxed in sporadic gun battles between the IRA and the UVF between 19 June and 25 June 1920; thereafter the gun battles ceased, but 'hooliganism' continued (McCann, 1974: 162-164; Murphy, 1981: 254-256; and DJ: 26 June 1920 and 17 August 1920). Thus, contrary to what Greaves writes, the cutters' strike did not take place at a time when sectarianism was 'at an ebb'.

My sources do not give much information on the build up to the strike, but the original purpose behind it was wage parity with shirt cutters in Britain. The strikers claimed that they were paid only the Trade Board minimum rates and that this was 2d an hour less than for shirt cutters in the rest of the United Kingdom (DJ: 16 July 1920). In chapter two it was shown that c1915, the SMF had persuaded the Shirtmaking Trade Board to reduce minimum wages rates in the Irish shirt industry to a lower level than in Britain, and that this decision had been strongly resented by the workforce (The Boundary Commission Papers, 1926: PRONI MIC 288 reel 11).

O'Donnell and McCorkell confirm the accuracy of Greaves' suggestion that most of the strikers were Protestants and Unionists. However, McCorkell told me that a significant number of shirt cutters did not join the strike.

One of the factories that stands out in my mind - there were others - because of its Protestant element: Ebrington, they didn't come out [on strike].

I asked him if the tensions created by the riots affected the course of the strike, he replied:

There was the curfew. Kennedy's, one of the factories I mentioned [which were not strike-bound] and there was others too, what they used to do was the boys who were cutters and doing other jobs in the factory - packing and all that sort of thing and opening the bails of cloth when they came in, general storemen - were probably members of the B Specials. They stayed in at night and loaded the lorries and in the morning... and big vans and sent them through to... Larne or the Belfast boat, because the dockers wouldn't load them on to boats [ie in Derry]. I can well remember that. That was the strain you were under

and you couldn't picket... well we went and stood you know outside and the police didn't bother, there were no stones nothing like that

He referred to another factory:

there was one... I can't remember the name of it , a farmer opened it up, from Inch Island. There was a small coterie of cutters working there - the Rosemount, it continued [through the strike]. There was a wee bit of a problem there strange to say. When you look at Rosemount now [Rosemount is now a strongly nationalist area], I say, 'did I live through that?' Because in fact there was the Rosemount flute band, I don't know if there was an Orange Lodge.

McCorkell explained the refusal of some Protestant cutters to support the strike in terms of the fact that they were not unionised:

There was no such thing as a closed shop, this strong religious quality, they had a grievance, but they were not members of the union, so they could evade joining the strike... you had as much chance of getting them into a union as as you had of getting them into heaven.

But, for McCorkell, what seems to have been the crucial difference between those Protestants who joined the strike and those who did not was that the latter had particularly strong connections with loyalist institutions. Thus he describes the storemen in Kennedy's as 'probably' being members of the B Specials. At another point in the interview he told me that 'the big problem was a tremendous number of the managers in [the] factories [were] B Specials.' The B Specials were a part-time, armed, and entirely Protestant auxiliary to the constabulary. In fact, it is not possible that the men to whom McCorkell referred were B Specials at the time of the cutters' strike: the establishment of the B Specials was announced in October 1920 and recruiting did not begin until November. However, McCorkell's recollection suggests that there was a special relationship between managers and shirt cutters in some factories, and, in his regard, it is worth noting three further items. The first is a characteristic of B Special organisation noted by Farrell (1980: 35):

The B Specials retained the hierarchical structure of the old UVF, based on the 'big house' or the local linen mill, with the landlord or linen boss as the commander and his tenants or workers making up the ranks.

Second, there is corroboration for McCorkell's assertion that some shirt factory managers were involved in the B Specials: in 1922 Mr W.

K. Tillie was given 'leave of absence' from his position as managing director of Tillie and Henderson's Derry factory to take up a position which involved the organisation of the police force for 'certain' counties in Northern Ireland (Minutes of the Board of Directors, PRONI T.3377/1)⁽⁵⁾. The third item is a comment made by the owner-manager of Hamilton's shirt factory, James Hamilton junior, during the short interview which I had with him ⁽⁶⁾. James Hamilton junior inherited the factory from his father; father and son had both been Unionist aldermen and the son had also been High Sheriff of Derry; their factory was, as I noted in the last chapter, identified with the Protestant community. Hamilton junior recalled the 1920 strike, and despite a general reticence, told me that none of his father's workers joined the strike: they had been told 'look, whatever is agreed to you'll get the same,' and, 'they accepted this - they were that kind of worker.'

McCorkell also suggests that a cutter's membership or, more importantly, non-membership of the Orange Order or the masons was an important factor affecting his attitude to the strike. He explained his own support for the strike and that of his workmates in McIntyre, Hogg, and Marsh's factory in terms of their lack of involvement in such 'secret societies':

The fella who got me into the union [Willie Rolston], he came from a town outside Letterkenny, a couple came from Carndonagh [both places are in Donegal]. They were Protestants, but they hadn't been gripped by the Derry and Belfast kind of thing, sure they had their secret societies in Donegal, but there wasn't the Orange element in it.

Likewise, when explaining his own involvement in the strike and his sympathy for the labour movement which later led him to support the local Labour Party he stressed that although he came from a Unionist family he had spent his infancy in Donegal; that, after the family moved to Derry, he had been brought up in a Catholic street and been sent to a Catholic school; and that he had never, therefore, joined the Orange Order or other 'secret societies.' For example he told me:

I wasn't much interested in religion, never joined the masons or the Orange Order, just the labour movement which was unusual at that time - I'm not looking for medals.

When I asked if he knew anything about the UULA in Derry, he was concerned to distance himself:

I never got connected with that because I joined the Labour Party much to the detriment of my mother - she was a good Unionist. I never joined any secret societies like the masons or the Orange Order... I was a wandering boy, [I do not know] whether it was the influence of the Christian Brothers [who ran the school he had attended]... I don't know a great deal about that one [the UULA], because I never got connected with it.

It might be thought that McCorkell's own political development tends to support Greaves' suggestion that shirt cutters were radicalised in the course of the strike. But this is not the case. McCorkell regarded his involvement in the Labour Party as untypical of Derry Protestants, and he recalled no other shirt cutter who was a member. The main influence in his political development was Annie Holmes, a UGW organiser who came to Derry after the strike was over. And although he describes himself as a member of the Labour Party, he did not engage in political activity and seems mainly to have been interested in the 'educational side' of things.

Why, then, did this mainly Protestant and Unionist group of strikers 'turn to' Paeder O'Donnell, a socialist republican and an active member of the IRA? In fact, McCorkell denies that the strikers sought help from O'Donnell or that he played any significant role in the strike. O'Donnell himself claims that he represented the cutters in the negotiations which ended the strike, but he thought that they approached him in spite of his politics not because of them: he told me that strikers were interested 'purely in wages, [the strike had] no political content,' and that they turned to him only because 'I had friendly contacts with one or two shirt manufacturers and I was able to use my influence.' I will examine this discrepancy further below, but the most important point about McCorkell's and O'Donnell's recollections is that they both undermine Greaves' suggestion that the strike was symptomatic of a general erosion of Unionism. I now want to consider the response of the local labour movement to the strike.

The picture suggested by Greaves' account is of a united labour movement with a high morale rallying around the striking shirt cutters. It is true that dockers and carters, all members of the ATGWU, supported the strike by refusing to transport goods to and

from the factories (DJ: 16 July 1920). McCorkell recalls:

We got marvellous support from the dockers. Thats the only thing I have in common with the Transport and General [Workers' Union] today. I fight them: right lot of comms [communists]. The wee Scottish secretary, a nice wee fella, he's a communist, but I still have a great softness in my heart for them 'cause they did us no harm, they backed us till their nose bled.

This support was all the more significant because in Derry the dockers and carters - despite their membership of a British union - were a mainly Catholic and nationalist workforce. However, other trade unionists in the city were less forthcoming; indeed, contrary to Greaves, the evidence suggests that the strike gave rise to dissension within the local labour movement and that the response of labour activists to it was mixed.

Apart from the dockers and carters, local trade unionists appear to have taken little interest in the cutters' strike until it began to affect women shirtmakers. On 17 July 1920, five weeks after the strike started, the factories affected by the strike ceased production and layed off their female workers, between 5,000 and 8,000 women in all (DJ: 19 July 1920, and LS: 5 August 1920). This created a crisis for the labour movement in the city because the ASTT, of which nearly 4,000 of the unemployed women were members, was unable to meet the bill for out-of-work benefit. The female members of the ASTT were clearly extremely dissatisfied with their union's failure to pay them: the Londonderry Sentinel (5 August 1920) reported an incident when 'hundreds' of women factory workers besieged the offices of the ASTT, and when no out-of-work benefit was forthcoming part of the crowd grabbed bread from a passing bread lorry, and later marched in procession to the shipyard shouting 'up the rebels!' and 'down with the shipyard!' McCorkell recalled another incident which indicates not only the volatility of the situation but also the important role played by members of the ATGWU: the UGW seems to have made some contribution to the support of the unemployed women,

the payout was in St Columb's Hall... I'm sure there was a couple of thousand women lined up right around waiting for their pay. Cheque came from head office, everything was in order, the bank refused to pay [It was suspected that the bank had been pressurised by the employers]. So, oh my God... wall ripped down there was a riot started. We got it quietened down. There was a big fella called Kelly of

the dockers' union [McCorkell described him as being dressed in a great coat and puttees in the fashion of IRA men in the period]... He said 'give me the cheque and I'll damn well soon get you the money,' and it was only with his intervention that he saved the face of the union. Because I'm quite sure to this day that the Garment Workers' [Union] could jump into the Foyle so far as membership was concerned if we hadn't been able to honour that.

Mr Flynn, the ASTT national official who was sent to Derry to deal with the crisis, was aggrieved at the situation in which his union had been placed by the cutters' strike and reported to the Derry Journal an allegation that many of the strike-bound firms had diverted work to their English factories where members of the UGW were working overtime: Derry shirt workers were being 'duped' by their union. The anonymous columnist, 'Veritas', who reported these allegations added that the strike had been precipitated for political reasons and claimed that it was a 'plot' (DJ: 2 August 1920).

The strikers replied to the allegations in the next issue of the Derry Journal (4 August 1920). Their spokesman stated that the 'rumour' about English workers doing Derry work was an employer inspired attempt to divide the workers, and that Flynn, by propagating it, was supporting the employers and attempting to divert the women's attention away from the ASTT's failure to pay them more than two weeks unemployment benefit. He expressed regret that women workers were suffering because of the strike, and appealed for them to join the UGW, claiming that if they had been members they would have been paid out-of-work benefit. He denied an unattributed allegation that the UGW had previously refused to accept women as members: the UGW had brought an organiser to Derry to recruit unorganised female shirt workers, but his efforts had been frustrated 'because of the lying propaganda of people afraid of losing their grip on the girls.'

It was at this point that O'Donnell made his first public intervention in the dispute - he wrote a letter to the Derry Journal (DJ: 6 August 1920). This letter clarifies O'Donnell's position with respect to the strike and reveals some of the tensions in the local labour movement. He expressed admiration for the shirt cutters' 'stand', but the main purpose of his intervention was to dissuade the

women from responding to the UGW's overtures and to encourage them to join his union - the ITGWU. To this end, he criticised the UGW alleging that they had deliberately chosen to fight in Derry because it was 'cheap': unlike in Britain, cutters and machinists in Derry belonged to different unions so the UGW was not responsible for the women's strike pay. He argued that Derry women would not gain by joining the UGW - 'they are fed up with cross-channel unions' - and admonished the strikers for deluding women about cross-channel unions. He also attacked the Trades Council for not having done anything to support the women who had been locked-out. At a meeting of the Derry Branch of the ITGWU held one week after the end of the strike (see DJ: 27 August 1920), O'Donnell, while again congratulating the cutters on their struggle, sought to take advantage of the disappointing outcome of their strike: he appealed for them, and female shirt workers too, to join the ITGWU; he criticised the strike as being 'inopportune' ⁷; and he attacked the the English members of the UGW for continuing to work throughout the Derry cutters' strike, and for contributing little to strike funds - he claimed that only Irish workers in Glasgow responded effectively to the deputation sent to Britain to collect money. At the end of the speech O'Donnell is reported to have said that he wanted to 'smash every British based union in Ireland.' When I interviewed him, O'Donnell expressed contempt for the men who, as the local officers of the British trade unions which predominated in Derry, led the local labour movement: 'they were infected by the vapid socialism characteristic of the British Labour movement'.

A spokesman for the shirt cutters responded to O'Donnell's first intervention in the following way (DJ: 9 August 1920). He rejected O'Donnell's allegation about the lack of support for the strike among English cutters, and argued that they had no reason to strike. He wrote that the shirt cutters had not known when they started the strike that women workers were going to be 'put out of work,' and claimed that a 'large number of women' had told him that they had made a mistake by not striking in sympathy with the cutters but that their union officials had 'barred their way.' He further claimed that many of 'the girls' now appreciated the value of belonging to a single union which 'knows the industry.' Finally, he agreed with

O'Donnell's claim that the Trades Council had done little to support the women, but he added that they had not done much to support the strikers.

As was shown in the last chapter, Derry Trades Council was in 1920, like the Irish labour movement as a whole, becoming increasingly identified with the nationalist cause, and there is some evidence that its tardy response to the cutters' strike was an expression of the view that the strike was part of a plot to destroy an Irish based industry - this is presumably what the Derry Journal columnist 'Veritas' was referring to when he or she alleged that the strike was precipitated for political reasons. The evidence is Flynn's reports to the Executive of the ASTT:

The shirt cutters (Garment Workers' Society) in the North of Ireland and Dublin came out on strike for an increase of 15s. per week. As Londonderry is the head and centre of the shirt industry in Ireland, the effects of this action at once became a matter of vital consideration. A special meeting of the Trades Council was held, at which the Executive of the Trades Council was instructed to take immediate action, with the object of referring the whole dispute to arbitration... They were... influenced by the fact that the Irish Department of the Board of Trade had already taken an active interest in the dispute, several meetings under an independent chairman having been held without result, the employers declaring that the rates asked for were an increase on those which obtained in England, and from that standpoint could not be considered. The situation was further complicated by the fact that, although only some 200 shirt cutters struck work, their action entailed the closing down of all the shirt factories, and the throwing out of work of 5,000 of our members, together with a certain loss of from £10,000 to £12,000 weekly to the business establishments of the city. A further curious fact was strongly emphasised at the Trades Council. Shirtmaking firms in Londonderry employing two-thirds of the workers had also factories in England and Scotland, and while the Londonderry workers were encouraged to strike, no dispute was allowed in the factories outside Ireland. This action was strongly condemned by members of the Trades Council, who stated that those behind the strike were not animated by a desire to increase wages, but were endeavouring to seriously destroy a native Irish industry which by sheer merit of the productions had won a foremost place in the world's markets. Serious disturbances in the city, and its occupation by the military, hindered the Trades Council in its contemplated action. The strike was still maintained, nor was any real attempt made to bring about a settlement. A Citizens Committee composed of leading men of all parties made three attempts to effect a settlement, but the men on strike refused to attend or to

help in any way those looking for an honourable peace. The strike was now entering upon its tenth week, and up to the present there is no evidence that those who engineered it have any real desire to promote a settlement. Resolved: that the report be accepted. (Journal of the ASTT September 1920).

It was further reported that Messrs Byrne, Rowlerson, and Flynn had approached

the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC... to... force a settlement on reasonable and recognised lines. It was pointed out that in England negotiations had taken the place of a strike weapon, and that this method should have been used in Ireland. The position was further complicated by the fact that the following firms having shirt factories in Londonderry, had also establishments in England and Scotland: -

McCarthy's,
Bryce & Weston,
Young & Rochester,
Grant & Sommerville,
Hogg & McIntyre,
Lloyd, Attree, & Smith,
Rodgers, Coleraine,
Lawrie & Porter,
Tillie & Henderson.

It is beyond doubt, and is, in fact, not disputed, that strike trade has been made on this side of the Channel, during the ten weeks which, up to the present, the dispute has lasted. The Londonderry Trades Council were very emphatic on this point that it was a deliberate attempt to strangle a native Irish industry in favour of English factory workers. (Journal of the ASTT September 1920).

It was only after O'Donnell's letter to the Derry Journal that members of the Trades Council took action to help local shirt workers. Within a matter of days Logue, chairman of the Trades Council and a nationalist member of the Corporation, announced that the Trades Council had joined with two unnamed committees to collect money for the relief of women shirt workers who had been locked-out, and that a flat rate benefit would be paid at the end of the week (DJ: 9 and 11 August 1920). Apart from Logue, the Committee set up to administer the fund included Edward McCafferty, a member of the shipwrights' trade union and a nationalist councillor; Charles McGrellis who was local secretary of the UGW; and a Mrs Burke from the mainly Protestant Waterside of the city - the ASTT was unrepresented. The Committee advertised its appeal in both the Londonderry Sentinel and the Derry Journal. The text of the advert was as follows,

Derry and District Trades and Labour Council Appeal on Behalf of The Factory Workers.

Fellow citizens, as you are aware a lock-out of the factory employees of the city has been going on for some three or four weeks, the result of which is a great many cases of distress. In making this appeal we hope that the merchants, trade societies, and citizens generally will give to the factory workers the support which they are entitled to, for they [ie the factory workers] have been foremost in any good work of relieving distress. (LS: 19 August 1920).

Contrary to what Greaves (1982) suggests, it was only at this stage - when the strike was nearing its end - that local Unionists intervened. I will now examine that intervention, but first I want to reconsider the question of the riots. It has already been shown that the Derry riots cannot be seen as the response of local Unionists to the shirt cutters' strike: inter-communal violence began two months before the strike started. Moreover, Greaves fails to cite sources for his argument that the riots were 'instigated by the "yellow" Labour Party,' otherwise known as the 'Ulster Protestant and Unionist Workers Party' (1982: 280-281). Certainly, I found no reference to such an organisation in the local newspapers of the period; nor, it seems, did Murphy (1981) or McCann (1974) both of whom give quite detailed accounts of the violence. According to the former, the trouble was triggered by the arrival of republican prisoners at Derry jail, and was sustained by the 'enthusiasm of the local IRA men' (1981: 254). For the latter, the troubles were caused by the police, the military, and loyalists who embarked on an assault against the Catholic community as a reaction to the nationalist victory in the local government elections held earlier in the year (1974: 162-164).

The first public statement relating to the cutters' strike made by any Unionist organisation came in the form of a UULA advert published in the Londonderry Sentinel on the 17 August 1920 (see also DJ: 18 August 1920) - only four days before the dispute ended. It was a specific response to O'Donnell's intervention and the Trades Council's decision to participate in the collection of funds for unemployed women factory workers; the text of the advert reads as follows:

Unionist Labour Association, City of Derry Branch.

Members of this association and all Protestant workers are earnestly requested to refuse to have anything to do with the ITGWU. It preaches republicanism and is used for political purposes. We strongly urge all Unionist workers to get into and remain in their respective amalgamated [ie British based] unions.

The attention of female factory workers is specially directed to this matter.

We also beg to announce that a fund for the relief of factory workers has been established; that collectors will be out with books bearing the stamp of the Unionist Association and we earnestly appeal to our fellow citizens to respond generously. (By order).

It is perhaps significant that the warning about the ITGWU contained in this advert was directed towards women shirt workers, not to the striking shirt cutters who, according to Greaves, were most susceptible to O'Donnell's advances.

Something of the thinking behind the warning to women shirt workers and the decision to set up a relief fund for them is revealed in the row which the advert generated. A Trades Council spokesman described the UULA intervention as an attempt to divide the workers, asserted that the Council's relief fund had been distributed irrespective of religion, and asked the UULA to co-operate with them; his statement was echoed by the Derry Journal (18 August 1920). The next issue of the Londonderry Sentinel contained an editorial in which it was argued:

If heads be counted the largest bodies of Derry workers out [of work] are the shirt factory hands. Their plight cannot be exaggerated. The organisation which they were induced to join, the Tailors' and Tailoresses' Society [ASTT] is unable to stand the strain on its funds of 7,000 [sic] members out of work, but not on strike. In the circumstances public charity has been solicited... It is impertinent of the Derry Journal to deny the right of the ULA [ie UULA] to issue an appeal on behalf of Protestant workers or describe it as 'an attempt to arouse sectarian animosities'... but for Councillor Logue there would be no need for a ULA. It was from his ruling as chairman of the Trades Council that the ULA sprang. He ruled against discussion of the Londonderry Improvement Bill on the grounds that it was political [this was a Bill for the re-drawing of electoral ward boundaries supported by the Unionists]. Yet he also ruled that conscription could be discussed as not being political. After inconsistencies like this is it any wonder that Unionist trade unionists should lose faith in the Trades Council.

The editorial writer repeated his rejection of the Derry Journal's criticism of the UULA relief fund, described the ITGWU as a 'purely

republican' organisation, and asserted that the Trades Council relief fund was 'an attempt to get Unionist factory girls into that association [the ITGWU].'

The UULA advert did not mention the shirt cutters' strike at all. Indeed, the only public comment on the strike from a Unionist point of view seems to have been that given at the beginning of the Londonderry Sentinel editorial quoted above (19 August 1920). The writer did not condemn the strikers or criticise the way in which they had conducted their dispute; rather it pointed out that 'probably one-fourth' of the city's workforce - including not just shirt workers but box-makers and transport workers - was workless, and stressed the 'serious' effect of the situation on the city's 'prosperity' and the 'moral effect of men and women spending their days wandering the streets, while they live on whatever doles they may receive from their organisations or from charity.' However, the editorial writer elaborated on a contrast between the position of the striking shirt cutters and that of striking railway workers:

the railway men, whose refusal to carry troops and munitions has resulted in their suspension, have been assured by a Catholic Bishop that the whole resources of the country are at their back, and are probably satisfied with the assurance. The case of the shirt cutters is curious. They are members of an English trade association, but the English members of this association have not been called out. On the contrary, they are working at top speed, executing orders, many of which in the ordinary course would have come to Derry. Thus they are opening avenues of trade which may permanently remain open to Derry's loss. This has been stated by the secretary of the Tailors' and Tailoresses' Association... and not contradicted. The purpose of the English members of the UGW is fairly obvious. They are keeping their Derry members out on strike with the knowledge that if the Derry men have their demands conceded the English members will get the increased wages without having had to strike.

The Derry branch of the UULA may have had some role in the negotiations which ended the dispute. McCorkell, as I have shown, denied that O'Donnell played any significant role in the ending of the strike; instead, he ascribed the major role in arranging the talks which ended the dispute to Sir Robert Anderson who was - though McCorkell does not identify him as such - the chairman of the UULA in Derry (DS: 14 February 1919). According to McCorkell, Anderson acted

on his own initiative, but

he was accepted [by the cutters] because he owned a knitting factory. Ach, he was a tory and a Unionist, but he was a fair man, accepted by both sides as a reasonable employer... He had been mayor of the town, I don't know whether he became an MP... a very nice fella, very nice man. He took a very conciliatory point of view and tried to get the employers to see reason. Now the employers had the difficulty - they had to bring the cloth in. They had to pay for the transport of the cloth to Derry... they also had to send the finished garments out, and there was this expense on the Northern Ireland manufacturers... this was the big problem, you see. Looking at it sitting here now I could say 'my God, they had a case,' but I wasn't going to say that then, I was just as wild as the rest of the young fellas. Oh Christ, we couldn't listen to that at all... It came to the conclusion that Sir Robert Anderson called a meeting of the employers and said, I can remember some of the things he said: 'this town has nothing left but shirtmaking,' we were probably the greatest shirtmakers in the world at this time... 'you've got to come to your senses and make some agreeable overtures to the union.' He called his own side together, though he was in knitting... alot of sensible work done by Sir Robert on that.

On the other hand, there is evidence to support the argument that O'Donnell had a role in negotiating the end of the strike. Not only is there O'Donnell's own testimony in interview, but the Derry Journal (DJ: 18 August 1920) reported that he was negotiating on behalf of the strikers, and at a public meeting held after the strike he is reported to have claimed that he had got the cutters a 'few extra bob' thereby enabling them to return to work (DJ: 27 August 1920).

It is not possible to arbitrate on the conflicting claims of McCorkell and O'Donnell; it is even possible that both are true because, prior to the final settlement of the strike, there seems to have been several rounds of negotiations in which a variety of people were involved (see report in the Journal of the ASTT September 1980 cited above). In any case, for my purposes, the two most important points are, first, that the Unionist intervention in the strike was much less sinister than Greaves suggests. It was a specific response to the Trades Council's decision to set up a relief fund for out-of-work female factory workers - a decision which the UULA and the Londonderry Sentinel regarded as an attempt to induce them to join the ITGWU. It did not express a fear that the shirt cutters' strike portended what Greaves describes as the 'eclipse' of local Unionism.

However, notwithstanding McCorkell's comments on Sir Robert Anderson, there is little doubt that the UULA's intervention was divisive. For example, the Londonderry Sentinel (19 August 1920) published a letter from a 'factory worker' which contradicted the Trades Council's claim that it was the formation of the UULA relief fund which had introduced a religious element:

The first to introduce religion and politics were the Catholic factory girls themselves. When I went down to the Guildhall last week to get my share of relief, the Catholic girls wanted to know what Protestants were coming there 'looking for Catholic benefit for' and they kept continually shouting 'up the rebels' and 'up Dublin'. The committee say they have distributed the money irrespective of creed and politics, but I know cases of families where there are two girls in each belonging to the Tailloresses' Society and only six shillings was given to each family.

The allegation that Protestant factory workers were being denied money collected in by the Trades Council appears to have been used as part of the wider propaganda battle being waged by Unionists and nationalists in Ulster. It was reprinted in a leaflet which was distributed in Belfast asking for contributions for the Protestant workers of Derry 'out' due to the cutters' strike (DJ: 3 September 1920).

The other important point is, that the strike ended on 20 August 1920 and, although the terms of the settlement and the process by which it was reached are obscure, it is clear that the cutters did not achieve their original aim, parity with English cutters, and were disappointed with the outcome. According to the Londonderry Sentinel (19 August 1920), the final round of negotiations began c17 August when a UGW representative submitted an amended wage claim to the SMF. The amended claim was described as less than the original demand but more than the SMF had offered, and as a 'sacrifice' by the cutters for the sake of the women factory workers. The Londonderry Sentinel (21 August 1920) reported that a settlement had been concluded on the 19 August 'when a small concession' was granted to the cutters, and that the the SMF had agreed to re-open the factories the following day.

To sum up. The shirt cutters strike cannot be understood within Greaves' framework: his argument that the strike was indicative of an

'ebb' in sectarianism and high 'Labour morale', and part of a process which threatened to 'eclipse' Unionism is to misunderstand the strike and exaggerate its political significance. The strikers were motivated by a purely economic grievance, and even if they did 'turn to O'Donnell' - and it is doubtful whether they did - it was in an effort to reach a satisfactory agreement with their employers and did not imply support for his socialist republican politics. Some solidarity across the sectarian divide was displayed during the strike: the strikers were mainly Protestants but included some Catholics and they received remarkable support from the dockers and carters - a mainly Catholic and nationalist workforce. However, there is evidence to suggest that support for the strike from some shirt workers and from other sections of the local labour movement was less forthcoming and that this was linked to political considerations: a minority of Protestant cutters and packers with particularly close links with Unionist institutions did not join the strike, and the slowness of the Trades Council to respond to the strike seems to have been linked to a concern that it was part of a 'plot' to destroy a 'native' Irish industry.

It seems to me that the problems with Greaves' analysis are not simply casual errors of judgement on the part of one historian: his analysis of the 1920 strike in Derry is redolent of the traditional Irish marxist analysis of a more infamous series of events which took place in Belfast at about the same time. In 1919 the mainly Protestant workforce in Belfast's shipbuilding and engineering complex struck for four weeks in pursuit of the 44 hour working week. It was, in Patterson's words (1980: 92), the 'first major conflict in which these groups of workers had been involved since 1895,' and it 'assumed a novel militant form.' The following summer, this same group of workers participated, or acquiesced, in the expulsion of many Catholic, and some socialist, workers from the shipyard. For Farrell (1980: 27-28, see also Gallacher, 1936) the strike was an instance when Protestant shipyard workers began - at last - to discover their true class interests; the expulsions were a product of manipulation by the Unionist ruling class who, fearing the emergence of socialism among Protestant workers, had, in the period after the

strike, stirred-up religious hatred and denounced socialism as a Sinn Fein plot.

Patterson (1980) has argued that Farrell and Gallacher misunderstand the Belfast events:

A major weakness of the traditional accounts is their tendency to exaggerate the political significance of any demonstration of an awareness of economic class interest on the part of the Protestant workers. The forty-four hour strike showed that the militant pursuit of an economic demand by a strategic section of Protestant workers had an insignificant effect on their political position. On a more general level, the idea is incompatible with a basic aspect of the labour movement recognised in many different works: that militant trade union consciousness is compatible with a conservative political affiliations. (1980: 118).

A related weakness of such analyses is that they present an, overly conspiratorial view of Unionist reaction to the strike. Clearly the cunning bourgeoisie and its political representatives who feature prominently in the interpretations of Gallacher and Farrell are caricatures of reality. (Patterson, 1980: 113).

I have made similar criticisms of Greaves' analysis of the shirt cutters' strike. However, it seems to me that these misunderstandings follow logically from the - mistaken - view of social and historical reality implicit in traditional Irish marxist perspective. I am referring to the tendency to conflate trade unionism and socialism in an evolutionary schema, whereby militant forms of the former are seen as a prelude which normally leads to the latter; and to the related tendency to define the meanings of struggles according to this evolutionary schema and without reference to the way in which these struggles are perceived by the people who participate in them (cf Geldhill 1988: 3-4 and Laclau 1985: 27).

3.4 The Aftermath of the Strike: the Fragmentation of the ASTT and the UGW

The break up of the ASTT and of the UGW began during the strike, but the shifts in trade union allegiance did not crystallise until afterwards. The permutations were as follows: the ASTT lost all but

200 of its members (see Table 2, appendix 2); up to 3,000 women joined the UGW (Stewart and Hunter, 1964: 173); 'several hundred' women joined the ITGWU (DJ: 27 August 1920); and the UGW lost some of its male membership to the ATGWU. To judge from the situation described in the previous section, one might expect that these shifts in union membership reflected sectarian divisions. After all, the strike took place at a time when relations between Catholics and Protestants in Derry were extraordinarily tense; the common struggle by Protestant and Catholic shirt cutters to redress a shared industrial grievance does not seem to have significantly altered their identities as Unionists and nationalists; and the acrimonious nature of the controversy between the UULA and the Trades Council could only have exacerbated political differences between women shirtmakers. However, although sectarian tensions posed a problem for some of the trade union activists and officials seeking to pick up the pieces after the strike, the organisations which emerged were not, for the most part, sectarian in their composition, nor, it seems, did most trade unionists choose to join one organisation rather than another for primarily sectarian reasons. In this section I will seek to elucidate the reasons behind these choices, examine the sectarian composition of each of the unions involved, and discuss some of the problems posed to union organisers and activists by communal tensions and divisions.

Stewart and Hunter (1964: 172) explain what they describe as the 'disintegration of the ASTT' in the aftermath of the strike in the following way:

The ASTT spent no less than £4,000 from its permanent fund in supporting those of its members locked-out. The failure [of the ASTT] to take any positive attitude towards the wage claim and the refusal to give grants to those who had joined unofficially in the strike destroyed confidence in the Society in spite of this heavy expenditure. The Amalgamated Society in Ireland disintegrated and left the United Garment Workers' as the only union organising factory workers.

While it is undoubtedly accurate to say that female shirt workers lost confidence in the ASTT, and that this loss of confidence was expressed in the mass exodus of women from the ASTT, Stewart and Hunter's analysis is inaccurate in several respects. First, the union did not spend 'no less than £4,000 from its permanent fund

supporting those of its members locked-out.' The union's annual report reveals that it spent £4,052 from its 'central or permanent' fund on strikes and lock-outs throughout Britain and Ireland in 1920, of which only £1,250 was spent on 'Londonderry Shirtmakers' (ASTT Annual Report 1920: 185-187). However, an additional amount of money was raised for the relief of Derry workers through an appeal to ASTT branches in Britain (Journal of the ASTT June 1921); the Derry Journal put the total amount spent by the ASTT at £3,000 (2 August 1920). A more important inaccuracy is their suggestion that it was the ASTT's 'refusal to give grants to those who had joined unofficially in the strike' which 'destroyed confidence in the Society.' There is no evidence that any female members of the ASTT joined the strike unofficially. In fact, the local press present the female shirt workers as the hapless victims of the dispute; for example, the Londonderry Sentinel (24 August 1920) refers to 'the female workers idle through no fault or inclination of their own.' It was the failure of the ASTT to provide sufficient money to support the women who had been layed off which caused the loss of confidence; though, if one was to treat as a statement of fact the claim made by the strikers' spokesman that a 'large number' of women had said that they had made a mistake by not striking in sympathy with the cutters (DJ: 9 August 1920), then Stewart and Hunter's suggestion that the ASTT's failure 'to take any positive attitude towards the wage claim' contributed to the women's loss of 'confidence' in the ASTT probably contains an element of truth.

Furthermore, it is not true that the disintegration of the ASTT 'left the United Garment Workers' as the only union organising factory workers.' In the first place, the ITGWU organised 'several hundred' female factory workers (DJ: 27 August 1920), and as Table 6 shows, the ASTT retained 200 members and recouped some of its losses throughout the 1920s. Moreover, the surviving minutes of the Londonderry Female Factory Workers' Branch of the ASTT which begin in May 1924 reveal that the union continued to represent shirt workers in negotiations with employers held under the auspices of the Trade Board (see also item 43 of the minutes of the Executive Council in the Journal of the ASTT, September 1925). Incidentally, item 43 of the Executive Council minutes, makes it clear that the ASTT accepted the

SMF's argument - resisted by the UGW in the 1920 strike - that Derry shirt workers be paid less than those in England to offset the extra cost of transport.

The secretary of the Londonderry Factory Workers' Branch of the ASTT, Sarah Doherty, was a Catholic who - according to a NUTGW official, Jack Macgougan, who knew her in the 1940s - was uninterested in politics 'but [was] if anything a nationalist.' Moreover, as has been shown, Flynn, the ASTT national official sent to Derry to deal with the crisis, had criticised the cutters' strike on a nationalist basis, alleging that the English members of the cutters' union had been doing 'Derry work', and that the strike was part of a plot to destroy a 'native Irish industry.' Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the Branch included Protestants as well as Catholics: the surviving minutes reveal that the ASTT had members in the strongly Protestant Ebrington factory (Minute: October 1926). The only insight into the politics of the activists which can be gleaned from these minutes is that they agreed to lend their support to the Trades Council's effort to secure labour representation in the Corporation elections of January 1926 (Minute: 20 October 1925). This is a reference to the formation of the local Labour Party which was discussed in chapter two, and it is interesting to note that one of the Labour candidates who was returned to the Corporation unopposed was a Mrs Simms (Journal of the ASTT March 1926), who is noted in the Branch Committee minutes (October 1926) as the ASTT shop steward in the Ebrington factory. She was also one of those Labour councillors who attracted criticism from nationalist politicians for attending the Duke of Abercorn's reception (DJ: 18 October 1926, and see section 2.2).

Unlike the ASTT, the ITGWU was not successful in attracting shirt workers from both sides of the sectarian divide: all of those who joined were Catholics. This was not a consequence of any sectarian intent on the part of O'Donnell or James Houston, the Derry Branch secretary. During the strike, O'Donnell had made it clear that he wished to organise Catholic and Protestant workers, and he took pride in telling me how he had organised some Protestant workers in a flour mill on the Waterside and gone into a strongly Protestant

area of the city to negotiate on their behalf^(e). And Houston is quoted as telling a meeting of factory workers that the ITGWU was not a sectarian organisation and that all religions were represented in it (DJ: 27 August 1920). However, as I have shown, O'Donnell's intervention in the cutters' dispute was accompanied by a bitter tirade against British trade unionism, and, seemingly, it was to this that those women who joined the ITGWU had responded: O'Donnell told me that any women who joined the ITGWU did so on 'a nationalist or sectarian basis.' Without the necessary evidence, one can only speculate about the effect of the UULA's warning about the ITGWU on Protestant shirt workers, but, in any case, it is hardly likely that O'Donnell's views would have attracted Unionist shirt workers. Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, O'Donnell recognised that his intervention was, in itself, divisive. At several points during my interview with him he expressed regret about his period as a union organiser in Derry. For example, he told me that 'I should not have intervened [in the strike], should have left it to the unions concerned,' and that the result of his intervention was to 'split the workforce.'

The ITGWU organisation in the shirt factories was still functioning in 1921. For example, the Derry Journal reported that the 'ITGWU (Girls Section) Derry' organised a picnic at Buncrana in June 1921 at which 'Ireland Arise', 'The Internationale', and 'The Red Flag' were sung. But it was not to last much longer. The circumstances of the collapse of the Derry Branch of the ITGWU are obscure - Derry was only one of more than 100 branches of the ITGWU which collapsed in the period 1920-22 (Greaves, 1982: 304). Greaves attributes this general disorganisation to the 'Anglo-Irish war and the Black and Tan Terror' (1982: 304) during which the union's headquarters in Dublin was attacked, and some members of staff arrested; others left the union so as to take up full-time positions in the IRA. O'Donnell was one of the latter, In October 1920 he resigned from the union and became the commander of the Second Brigade of the Northern Division of the IRA (Greaves, 1982: 292 and Freyer, 1973: 30). But Derry does not seem to have been neglected: Charles Ridgeway - former secretary of the Belfast Branch of the ITGWU (Greaves, 1982: 279) - replaced Houston as secretary of the

Derry Branch, and, despite his commitment to IRA activities, O'Donnell continued to take an active interest in local union affairs. Thus, the collapse of the Derry Branch cannot simply be explained in terms of the the exigencies of a guerrilla war, though these may have been a factor; rather, it seems to have been precipitated by a local industrial dispute.

The dispute was in Watt's distillery. On 3 June 1921, 130 workers, all members of the ITGWU, struck against an attempt by management to introduce a wage-cut. The strikers were particularly aggrieved because the management, who did not recognise the ITGWU, had not consulted them about the matter. The National Amalgamated Union of Labour (NAUL) which had 40 members in the distillery did not join the strike because, according to Logue, local secretary of the NAUL, nationalist councillor, and chairman of the Trades Council, the wage-cut had been accompanied by a reduction in hours to the pre-War level; because the ITGWU had not supported an NAUL wage claim for distillery workers in November 1920; and because he wanted to avoid the threatened closure of the distillery (DJ: 6, 10, 13, and 20 June 1921). An ITGWU spokesman explained that his union had not supported the November 1920 action because the ITUC had urged that all wage movements be suspended and that all trade union funds be put at the disposal of the railway men who were refusing to move munitions; the strike continued (DJ: 10 June 1921). Meanwhile, the the distillery closed and was never to re-open (DJ: 10 June 1921).

According to O'Donnell many people in Derry held him as being personally responsible for the closure of the distillery. He was involved in the dispute but rejected the idea that he was in any sense to blame for what happened: he told me that decisions relating to the strike had not been taken by him but by a Strike Committee. At the time (DJ: 17 June 1921) he defended the ITGWU's position by arguing that no industry had the right to continue if it could not pay a living wage and that if workers let a threat of closure intimidate them, then, the labour movement would be undermined. He then went on to contrast the 'heroic' struggle of Irish workers fighting the British blockade with the failure of the 'triple alliance' of unions in Britain.

However, local critics did not confine themselves to abusing O'Donnell, they also attacked Ridgeway and the tactics used by successive ITGWU organisers in Derry. One critic, who in his letters to the Derry Journal (13 and 17 June 1921) signed himself 'Derryman', accused the ITGWU of intimidating those who had continued working during the dispute and alleged that the interests of Derry workers were being sacrificed for a bit of spite between two unions. He continued:

The [Irish] transport union ruined labour in Derry by splitting it up on religious and political grounds and need not try to cover up its tracks now by having a Belfast Protestant here as an organiser [a reference to Ridgeway].

'Derryman' regarded the fact that Ridgeway was from Belfast as evidence of a plot: a Belfast distillery would get work which had hitherto been done by Watt's. In a second letter 'Derryman' wrote that the socialist ideas advocated by the ITGWU were a threat to 'faith and fatherland.' Ridgeway claimed, in a reply to 'Derryman' (DJ: 15 June 1921), that this was the third time that he had been accused of being a Belfast Orangeman; on one of the other two occasions the accusation had been made by an under manager in Watt's. Mr M. McNaught, a member of the NAUL, claimed that the only reason a section of the workforce in Watt's had joined the ITGWU was that its 'organiser came to Derry in June 1920 when sectarian feeling was at its height... and criticised English based trade unions' (DJ: 22: June 1921). According to O'Donnell the Derry Branch of the ITGWU had also been denounced by a local priest; he added that the Church in Derry was very influential and strongly anti-socialist. Thus, the ITGWU was subject to criticism not just by loyalist organisations such as the UULA, but also by sections of the nationalist community. And it seems that the Derry Branch of the ITGWU could not withstand either the criticism arising from, or the loss of membership occasioned by, the closure of Watt's distillery.

O'Donnell spent most of the latter part of 1921 and most of 1922 in Dublin where he was a leading member of the anti-treaty faction of the IRA. He was taken prisoner by the Free State forces after the fighting in the Four Courts and remained in prison until March 1924. He never returned to Derry as an industrial organiser, but spent the rest of his life as a writer and a socialist republican activist in

the South of Ireland. Ridgeway, was also involved in the Civil War on the anti-treaty side, and he was arrested by Free State forces in Monaghan in July 1922 (Greaves, 1982: 314).

Three main questions remain to be answered: the first concerns those cutters who remained loyal to the UGW, the second concerns those who joined the ATGWU, the third concerns the women who joined the UGW. I will discuss the first two questions together. McCorkell remained loyal to the UGW. He did so as a matter of course: he was a young apprentice and the journeymen cutters in his cutting room all remained members of the UGW. He first explained the defection of some cutters to the ATGWU in relation to the help which the latter had given to shirt cutters during the strike: for example, he concluded his recollection of the occasion when Kelly, a member of the ATGWU, persuaded the bank to cash a cheque for the relief of unemployed women in the following way:

the Transport and General Workers' Union, I've always had great respect for since, pulled us out of a hole... with the result that an number of the cutters left and joined the Transport and General Workers' Union.

However, it is clear from his recollections that many cutters were unhappy with the settlement of the strike and blamed the UGW for it:

as a matter of fact the sour members of the union in the cutting room were more or less blaming it on the union - it was a good by-pass: 'well we didn't get all we needed but we'll blame the flaming union for that!' which was a wee bit unfair because the union did, I thought, a reasonable job, not an excellent job because it was an awkward situation.

This was combined with a more long standing grievance held by some local cutters against Andrew Conley, the general secretary of the UGW:

Previous to [the strike] there had been a meeting between Andy Conley and the old union... the Tailor and Tailoresses, and the meeting was held in the Guildhall... Andy had a few drinks too many... and didn't give them [the cutters] attention... and the cutters remembered this and as soon as they got this opportunity they went out, said Andy was so bloody drunk... that he didn't give them the attention. I can't verify it, but thats what they said.

Additionally, McCorkell thought that 'the religious question came into all these things.' On the one hand he thought that Catholic cutters were particularly dissatisfied with the settlement

of the strike because of Sir Robert Anderson's involvement:

There was always the feeling, this Catholic/Protestant thing, that he was in with the employers. But I always thought he had done a very good job in getting them together and saying, 'look you've got to get this thing settled.'

To remind the reader, Anderson was the chairman of the UULA in Derry and, according to McCorkell, the prime mover in arranging the talks which ended the strike. On the other hand, McCorkell thought that some Protestant shirt cutters 'more from religious grounds than anything else, stayed in the Garment Workers' [Union].' What he meant by this was that they regarded the ATGWU as being too militant and left-wing:

Well the question was in the minds of a very very strong conservative town that these fellas [the dockers] were labourites or communists, no communists were mentioned at that period, but, you know, there were left-wingers and they [the cutters who stayed in the UGW] didn't want to know them at all.

The fact that the core membership of the ATGWU in Derry, the dockers and carters, was mainly Catholic was also a factor. McCorkell summed up the attitude of some Protestant shirt cutters to the dockers in the following way:

There was this majority of dockers Catholic - mind you, there were a few Protestants. The other thing was that the Protestants always felt they were a wee cut above the Catholic: the Catholic was the peasant - that goes through Irish history... and they wanted into a respectable job: engineering or particularly into a [shirt] factory. It was a nice clean, tidy job, you weren't going... emptying a boat with timber... or carrying in bags of grain to McCorkell's granary [no relation]. That type of job was a wee bit below, although there was Protestants in it, but generally speaking they wanted to get their sons into a respectable job, a clean job.

However, on reflection, McCorkell thought that 'religious' factors were not the most important determinant of cutters' trade union affiliations, and that, although those who remained in the UGW tended to be Protestants, those who defected to the ATGWU included both Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, he made several comments which leads one to suspect that issues to do with sex and skill were at least as, and probably more, important. For example, when he was explaining his own reasons for staying in the UGW and not following those cutters who joined the ATGWU, he told me:

and we weren't happy with some of the [irl] complaints - it was this question of male chauvinism, this male thing, the mother and the father and who was to do what, though they wouldn't have known what that meant then.

This is an obscure and anachronistic remark which he did not elaborate on, but on another occasion, after he had repeated his assertion that one of the reasons that cutters left the UGW was that they were dissatisfied with Conley's drunkenness, he told me:

and the cutters were being undermined by women coming into the cutting room and they didn't like that... the men felt that they had been let down - the Garment Workers' [Union] was a strong union of women as against the ATGWU

The significance of these remarks will be assessed at the end of this chapter.

The UGW, despite the failure of the strike and the defection of some men to the ATGWU, emerged as the union with the largest membership in the Derry shirt industry - Stewart and Hunter (1964) put the figure at 3,000. The political disagreements expressed in the controversy over the relief fund, and the general political tension did not prevent shirt workers from both communities from joining the UGW: its membership included a small number of Protestant men, and a much larger number of Catholic and Protestant women. However, there is evidence that this heterogeneous membership created problems for the full-time secretary who was appointed to reorganise the Branch in the aftermath of the strike, and for the union's activists. The new secretary was Annie Holmes; before becoming a union official she had been a dressmaker in Leeds (GW: August 1926). McCorkell gives some impressions of the gulf between Catholic and Protestant members of the union and of the difficulties which Holmes faced:

We weren't in the velvet period of trade unionism... and the contributions had to be collected. Willie Rolston from Remelton, he was the shop steward in Hogg and McIntyre's but I was the collector. So my job on Friday night was to walk up and down Carlisle Road on the Protestant side and get shouted from the other side 'theres a bob, thats my contribution.' That's one of the ways we collected the money... When I tell that story over here [in Scotland], they look at me as if I was mad. But they don't know that [sic] days, the Protestants walked up the right side and ne're the twain met... you couldn't collect it [the dues] in the factory except in the toilets [because the employers] weren't happy about it. Rolston was a married

man, there were other married men that didn't want to get involved in that sort of thing. But I was an apprentice, and there was others, thats were most of the collecting was done.

McCorkell did not say whether he crossed the road to collect the contributions or whether the Catholics threw the money to him on the other side, but which ever was the case the story attests to the depth of the division between Protestant and Catholic members of the UGW.

Holmes quickly integrated herself into local political life - by 1926 she was assistant secretary of the Trades Council and treasurer of the newly formed Labour Party (GW: August 1926). But McCorkell suggests that she found it difficult to cope with local realities, sectarian and otherwise. One of the problems which she had to deal with was the fact that the UGW was not the only organisation with members in the factories. To judge from reports in the ASTT Journal, she did not deal with this situation very effectively. She is said to have declared that,

all work not made by a member of their union [the UGW] would be declared 'tainted goods'... the delivery of goods to or from the factories [with workforces not organised by the UGW] was to be held up if possible. (Journal of ASTT June 1924).

Although the campaign against non members of the UGW did not succeed - the plans were leaked to the employers - ASTT officials were, not surprisingly, outraged by it; this together with a residual animosity from the strike, and, perhaps, differing approaches to wage claims, gave rise to considerable bitterness between ASTT and UGW activists. This may be gauged by the fact that during a discussion about amalgamation between the ASTT and the UGW at the former's 1927 conference, Derry activists persisted in submitting a motion against amalgamation despite being urged to withdraw it by the union's leadership; Sarah Doherty told the conference: 'We had 5,000 members in Derry and this splendid organisation was smashed by the other society' [Journal of ASTT September 1927]). Sarah Doherty also made several complaints about the Derry Branch of the UGW in the ASTT Journal, but nowhere is there any suggestion that sectarian differences were a part of the inter-union rivalry. This is not surprising, afterall, as we have seen, both unions appear to have had a mixed membership. According to McCorkell, however, Holmes's action

against non-unionists in atleast one factory did reveal an insensitivity to local realities:

by God did she work, there wasn't a factory she didn't visit, and she was courageous... Holmes was a great woman, but she was English and she made the great mistake of not appreciating [the strong Protestant element in Ebrington], she got the ATGWU to stop deliveries of cloth, and that was another grudge they held.

In a more light hearted vein, McCorkell recalled other aspects of the local situation which Holmes failed to appreciate:

I can well remember that the unemployment question was a very high one at that period in Derry. One meeting that sticks out in my mind was Annie was asked to talk about 'back to the land'... I was seething because we'd just left it. There was an old fella sitting at the back of the hall... He said, 'I'll join that movement when I see her sitting under a cow milking it!' the whole place just fell to pieces.

3.5 Conclusion

There is ample evidence for the existence of tensions between Catholic and Protestant shirt workers during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. However, I have shown that, in relation to this group of workers, traditional Irish marxist theories do not illuminate much about the the effect of sectarian divisions on trade unionism, and that they may, as in the case of Greaves' analysis of the shirt cutters' strike of 1920, actually lead to a misunderstanding. It is certainly true that female shirt workers found it difficult to organise; however, in section 3.2 I showed that, contrary to what traditional Irish marxism would lead us to expect, sectarianism was not the main or only obstacle to unionisation: the trade union establishment in Derry was neither hostile nor indifferent to the organisation of female shirt workers, and the history of their early attempts to organise in the shirt industry suggests that while sectarianism among the women was perceived as a problem it was not insurmountable. To understand the difficulties experienced by women shirt workers in their first efforts to organise, and to determine the extent to which

sectarianism played a part in the process, would require much more evidence than is currently available. Fortunately, such evidence is available for later periods, and in the next chapter I will examine the development of trade unionism among women shirt workers in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s.

It is also true, as was shown in sections 3.3 and 3.4, that the industrial conflict in the Derry shirt industry in the summer of 1920 became embroiled in the near civil war between Unionists and nationalists which was then at its height, and that trade unionism fragmented in the aftermath of the industrial conflict. However, we have seen that Desmond Greaves (1982) fundamentally misunderstands the relationship between the industrial and the political conflict, and that his misunderstanding results from the misconceptions which, as was shown in chapter one, lie at the heart of traditional Irish marxism. Moreover, while it is true that some of the divisions which emerged between shirt workers in the course of the strike had a sectarian dimension, there were some remarkable - remarkable given the context - displays of cross-community solidarity; and although divisions between Catholic and Protestant shirt workers continued to pose problems for union organisers after the strike, trade unionism revealed a capacity to accommodate such divisions.

Finally, when one reconsiders the history presented in this chapter in the light of John McCorkell's comments on why some shirt cutters defected from the UGW to the ATGWU in the aftermath of the 1920 strike one begins to suspect that gender, rather than politics or religion, was the main dividing line in the structure of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry. After all, in 1920 the Derry Branch of the UGW was exclusively composed of men, most of them Protestants, who embarked on the strike with no apparent thought for the conditions of their female colleagues, Protestant and Catholic alike, or for the effects which the strike might have on them. This suspicion is increased with the knowledge that the haemorrhage of male shirt cutters to the ATGWU continued throughout the 1920s so that by 1932 it was the union to which most shirt cutters belonged. Nevertheless, it must remain merely a suspicion because the available evidence is contradictory. Although the Derry Branch of the UGW was

exclusively male in 1920, the union was overwhelmingly female in the rest of the United Kingdom - in 1919 the membership figures were 79,000 women and 23,000 men (Stewart and Hunter, 1964: 172) - and it had an ethos which 'claim[ed] a universality embracing Jew and Gentile, craftsman, factory worker and home worker, without distinction of age or sex' (Stewart and Hunter, 1964: 172). Moreover, during the strike, as I have shown, the cutters' spokesman rejected allegations that they had refused to accept women as members of the UGW in the past, and urged them to join. However, in chapter five I will explore this suspicion further in relation to the period after 1920, a period for which the evidence necessary to examine the interplay of gender, skill, and sectarianism in the organisational choices made by shirt cutters in Derry is available.

CHAPTER 4: THE DECLINE AND GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONISM AMONG WOMEN SHIRTMAKERS 1920-1952

4.1 Introduction

The pattern of organisation among women shirtmakers in Derry during the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s appears to contradict the view, predominant in the literature, that the growth of trade unionism in Northern Ireland was thwarted by sectarianism. To be sure, union membership in Derry shirt factories declined steeply after the high point of 1918/1919, but so too did union membership among women and in the United Kingdom in the 1920s and 1930s. And after 1945 union membership among Derry's women shirtmakers - as among men and women workers in the United Kingdom - increased prodigiously¹. In other words, fluctuations in union membership in Derry shirt factories mirrored broader trends (see Mackie and Patullo, 1977: 165). Furthermore, the density of union membership² in Derry factories in 1918/1919 and between 1945 and 1952 was comparatively high by the standards of clothing workers in Britain. So much so, that the Derry case seems to be an exception to the usual picture of trade unionism among women in Britain. British labour history tells us that 'women's hold on trade union organisation' has been 'persistently weak' (Alexander, 1980: 141; see also Lewenhak, 1978: ix, and Turner, 1962: 293): generally speaking, the density of union membership among women workers has been lower than that among men, and women have tended to be under-represented among union activists and officials. Shirtmakers in Derry conform to neither of these two generalisations. In this chapter, I will discuss the conjunctural factors influencing the fluctuations in union membership among women shirt makers in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, and then explore further the seemingly anomalous development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the late 1940s in relation to both traditional Irish marxism and general theories about women workers and trade unionism. However, before I can say anything more about the form

which the discussion will take it is necessary to detail the trends in union membership and participation outlined above.

The available statistics relating to trade union membership among men and women shirt workers are as desultory as those relating to the numbers employed in the industry (see chapter 2.3). Nevertheless, it is possible to discern trends in membership from the descriptions and comments recorded in the minutes of the Branch Committee of the ASTT/NUTGW or published in the union journals, and calculate union densities for the odd years in which the necessary employment and membership figures are available.

To recap on the figures presented in the last chapter. In 1918 the Londonderry Female Factory Workers' Branch of the ASTT had 3,464 members. Following the 1920 strike approximately 3,000 of these women transferred to the UGW leaving only 200 in the ASTT. Subsequently, ASTT membership revived to the extent that it had 819 members in 1927. After 1920 UGW membership in Derry declined to about 2,000 men and women in 1926 (cf Mortished, 1927: 223). In the late 1920s the organisers of both unions with female members in the Derry shirt industry experienced difficulties in maintaining membership levels. By 1930, ASTT membership had declined to 216 (see Table 6) and activists were complaining that it was difficult to 'keep girls in the society' and about the unfairness of a situation in which 'so many of the girls were not in the society and left the burden to others' (ASTT Branch Committee Minutes: 26 March 1931). At the same time, several of Annie Holmes' reports to the Garment worker dwell on the difficulties of maintaining UGW membership (April and December 1926; see also March 1928).

Following a ballot of the membership in December 1931, the ASTT and the UGW amalgamated to form the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. The Derry Branches of the two unions 'fused' on 10 October 1932. The new structure was as follows: the 'shirt section' of the UGW Branch Committee fused with the 'factory section' of the ASTT Branch Committee to form the 'factory section' Committee of the NUTGW; like wise, the ASTT tailors' section fused with the UGW tailors to form a tailors' section Committee within the NUTGW. It

was decided that the two new Committees were to meet separately once a month and jointly once every two months. A meeting of the members voted in favour of this arrangement by 33 votes to 4 (Minutes of the Londonderry Branch of the NUTGW^(a): 10 October 1933).

Sarah Doherty, despite her previous hostility to the UGW, had high hopes that the amalgamation of the two unions would solve the membership problem. During the debate on the proposed amalgamation at an ASTT conference in August 1931 she is reported to have said that she:

supported amalgamation [because] for the past 11 years they had been trying to re-organise the factory workers and if amalgamation took place they would be in a position to do so. When they had a Branch in 1920 with one Society they had 5,000 members [sic], and they hoped to have 5,000 members again with amalgamation. (Journal of the ASTT September 1931).

In her first report to the Garment worker (GW: January 1932) after being appointed secretary of the Derry Branch of the amalgamated union, she wrote:

Our strength is at last united, and I have no doubt that the result will be for the lasting betterment of the working conditions in the clothing trade generally, as better organisation is bound to follow the uniting of our forces. Of course, it will take some time to set the new machine in motion, but not very long. Our shop stewards will now be able to deal more effectively with the mean non-unionists who have for so long played one union against the other and taken all the advantages which loyal trade unionists obtain for them without contributing a single penny for the upkeep of any trade union.

Her hopes were ill founded; union membership and Branch activity deteriorated after amalgamation. Some male shirt cutters had, as I have shown, defected to the ATGWU prior to amalgamation, and in June 1932 the newly formed NUTGW entered into a national agreement which formally recognised the 'right' of the ATGWU to organise cutters in Derry (see next chapter). Only a few of the 200 or so male cutters employed in the Derry shirt industry continued as members of the NUTGW. Male handicraft tailors remained loyal to the NUTGW, but, although well organised, they were few in number: for example, in the year prior to amalgamation there were only 48 members in the tailors' Branch of the ASTT (see Table 6). The ASTT brought approximately 317 women into the amalgamated union; there is no figure for the number

of women from the UGW. However, one indication of the decline in Branch activity is the infrequency of Committee meetings after 1934: no meetings were recorded between November 1934 and March 1936; only two in 1936; and in 1937 there was one 'Yearly Meeting' and one meeting of Tillie and Henderson workers. In 1938 there was only a 'Yearly Meeting' at which a decrease in membership was noted and the secretary was reported as saying 'the workers did not seem to realise how necessary it was for them to become members of the union' (Minute: 3 March 1938).

The most telling evidence of the decline in Branch membership in the 1930s is a report by Mr L. Hodson (GW: November 1935), a member of the NUTGW from England, who 'acting on instructions from head office... proceeded to Londonderry to give our Irish colleagues a hand with the organisation of the shirt workers in that town.' Following an account of his consultation with the Branch Committee, his propaganda work at factory gates, and a 'mass meeting in the Guildhall', he concludes:

That, however, appears to be the sad end of the story, for very few of the Derry shirt workers are in the trade union. The mass meeting [was]... a little bit more encouraging... for we had 200 workers, male and female. Many of these promised to fill up application forms. There is large scope for organisation in Derry and if the girls would only see things in their true light, our membership would run into thousands.

The decline was halted in the early 1940s. The Branch Committee met more regularly than before: there was an average of six Committee meetings a year in each of the five years between 1939 and 1944 inclusive. Membership was still low and regarded as a problem by the activists; for example, at the 'Yearly Meetings' held in 1941 and 1942 the main motion urged action to be taken against the 'thousands of non-trade unionists employed in government work' - work which it had been agreed by the government should be performed by trade union labour. But it had increased from the low point of the mid 1930s: one indication of the core membership of the union in this period is that the Branch was supplied with 800 ballot papers for the Executive Board elections held in 1943/44; members in arrears with their subscriptions were not entitled to vote (Minute: 5 December 1943).

Beginning in the summer of 1945 Branch membership increased prodigiously. Almost every Branch Committee meeting and monthly Branch report published in the Garment Worker through the second half of 1945 and early in 1946 notes several hundred newcomers to the union. In July 1946, Sarah Doherty told the Branch Committee that local NUTGW membership was 2,144 - an increase of 1,000 since June of the previous year. This was not a flash in the pan; as a NUTGW estimate of 3,300 members in Derry in March 1948 shows, it was sustained growth (see Table 7). These gains in membership were made only among the women workers: in 1950 - the only year for which a comprehensive sexual breakdown of membership is available - there were 3,335 female members in the Derry Branch of the NUTGW and only 59 men (Minute: 15 April 1950). By all accounts, most of these men were tailors.

I will locate these fluctuations in union membership among Derry shirtmakers in the context of trends in union membership in the United Kingdom in a moment, but first I want to consider the extent to which women participated in trade unionism as activists and as officials. Judging from my respondents' recollections, most NUTGW shop stewards were women. A more useful measure of women's active involvement in union affairs are the lists of Branch Committee members and office holders occasionally noted in the minutes of the ASTT/NUTGW. An examination of the sexual composition of the Branch Committees relative to the numbers of men and women among the wider membership reveals the following. In 1924, the Committee of the Female Factory Workers' Branch of the ASTT consisted of 10 women (Minute: 23 July 1924). The chairman was a tailor even though the tailors constituted a separate local Branch. As was pointed out above, when the ASTT and UGW amalgamated in 1932 male membership was very small: most cutters had defected to the ATGWU and there were, at most, 60 tailors. Nevertheless, men had a majority on the full Committee which was set up following the amalgamation: of the 10 Committee members 6 were men (2 cutters and 4 tailors) and 4 were women; the chairman was a cutter - John Kilgore (Minute: 10 October 1933). The sexual composition of Committees elected in the late 1940s was more representative of the numbers of men and women among the wider membership. Of the 13 Committee members elected in 1948

only 1 was male, but the chairman was also male. The former was a shirt cutter in Tillie and Henderson's factory; the latter was a tailor. The Committee which was elected to serve in 1950 consisted of 3 men (2 cutters and 1 tailor) and 7 women (I do not know the sex of two of the members) and a male chairman (the shirt cutter from Tillie and Henderson's mentioned previously). Thus, despite a tendency for men to be over-represented among Branch Committee members and office holders, women always had a substantial involvement in the Branch Committee.

Judging from my respondents' recollections, it can be safely assumed that the men and women who joined Branch Committees were among the most active members of the union. However, to say that women were usually well represented on the Branch Committees of the ASTT and NUTGW is not to say anything about the extent to which they influenced union decision-making. Several studies of union government have questioned the significance of the branch committee: some scholars emphasise the extent to which union power is concentrated in the hands of a few full-time officials, others argue that the branch committee is less important than unofficial or informal, work-place based, shop stewards' committees (see James, 1984: 111, and Hyman and Fryer, 1975: 155). I will examine the role of members of the Derry Branch Committee of the NUTGW in decision-making and union government later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, but for the moment only two points need to be made. First, although there were occasions when groups of activists met informally and when factions developed, there was never any organised, unofficial, work-place based shop stewards' movement: the Branch Committee remained the only local arena in which activists could air their views. And second, women were not so well represented among the full-time officials of the union. As has already been shown, prior to the 1932 amalgamation, the organising secretaries of both the UGW and the ASTT were women: Annie Holmes and Sarah Doherty respectively. The latter continued as secretary of the NUTGW until she retired in 1947. Her successor was a man, Stephen McGonagle. In 1928 the UGW executive created the post of Irish regional organiser, and stipulated that 'the person to be appointed must be a journeyman tailor' (GW: August 1928); the man appointed was Edward McCafferty.

The NUTGW retained the post and it has always been held by a man: Terence Waldron was appointed in November 1938, and Jack Macgougan in 1945.

I now wish to locate the pattern of union membership and participation among Derry shirtmakers in a broader context. The fluctuations in union membership among Derry shirt workers 1920-1952 follows the United Kingdom pattern. The years 1918/1919 and 1947-52 were high points for union membership among shirtmakers in Derry; these years were also high points for union membership among women in the United Kingdom: Mackie and Patullo (1977: 165) describe the decline in membership - among men as well as women - in the 1930s as of 'drastic proportions.' And according to Lewenhak (1978: 247):

Between 1946 and 1947 the number of women [trade union] members in the country [Britain] as a whole rose by over 100,000. The proportion of women who were union members also rose so that by 1948 it amounted to a quarter of the total female workforce. Almost as high as in 1920.

Clegg (1979: 177) writes, 'total trade union density [ie men and women in Britain] reached a peak in 1948 with 45% of the labour force.'

Within this over-all pattern of fluctuating membership, trade union densities among female shirt workers in Derry were high in comparison with clothing workers elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In 1918/1919 Derry factories employed between 5,000 and 8,000 workers; membership of the Londonderry Factory Workers' Branch of the ASTT was nearly 3,500; therefore, the trade union density was at least 50%. It is not possible to calculate the trade union density among British clothing workers in this period (see Lewenhak, 1978: 247), but the reader may recall that of the 7,852 female members who joined the ASTT in 1917, 3,154 worked in Derry (see section 3.2). Judging by the figures presented in Table 6, the density of union membership among Derry shirtmakers in 1948 was approximately 50%. At the 1945 conference of the NUTGW, the delegates had set themselves the target of recruiting 50% of the clothing workforce in the Britain - that is, 250,000 workers out of a workforce of approximately 500,000 (118,000 men and 434,000 women; see Eaton and Gill, 1981: 201); this target was achieved in the 1970s, but certainly not the 1940s or the 1950s (Stewart and Hunter, 1964: 219, and Coyle, 1982: 20). Indeed, on the

basis of membership figures published in the 1952 annual report of the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) the density of trade unionism among women clothing workers in Britain was only 30.3%. This figure is probably an over-estimate: the membership reported to the TUC was almost certainly exaggerated, and in September 1952, a member of the secessionary Branch Committee of the NUTGW claimed that the union had recruited only 15.5% of British clothing workers (DJ: 15 September 1952). Moreover, the density of union membership in Derry in 1948 was almost on a par with that among clothing workers in Leeds, a city which was the original headquarters of the NUTGW and which, for many years, contained its best organised branches (Stewart and Hunter, 1964: 198-199).

It is more difficult to find a standard against which to judge the level of active participation by women in the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. The only available comparisons relate to a much later period; nevertheless, they do tend to confirm my suggestion that the level of involvement by female NUTGW members in Derry was relatively high: Coyle (1982: 20) describes union organisation in the British clothing industry in the 1970s in the following way:

About half the industry's workforce is unionised and women make up about 90 per cent of the membership. The organisation of female labour has tended to occur in those branches of the industry where men and women are employed, whilst branches such as light clothing [of which the shirt industry is a part], which has an almost entirely female labour force, remain slow to unionise ('Garment Worker', May 1970). Men dominate the union hierarchy both in the National Executive and at local level... The scope for women's participation is limited even if they were interested. As well as branch meetings being held at times which are difficult for women to attend, the Community Development Project study of North Shields noted that although five clothing firms in the area had 900 union members, there was no union branch in North Shields. Not surprisingly therefore, 'the union, despite membership, is weak, and on the whole makes little difference to these women's working lives.' (North Tyneside Community Development Project, 1978: 42).

Boraston et al (1975: 109-113) studied three branches of the NUTGW in a particular district in England in the early 1970s. Women constituted between two-thirds and 90% of the clothing workforce in the area. They found that

branches had almost disappeared, and business was conducted either within the plant or between the shop stewards and

the area officer. Attempts to stimulate branch activity had met with little success in No2 and No3 branches, and No1 branch met only twice a year.

Each of the large plants had a head shop steward, 3 were male and one was female.

From my perspective, the most interesting questions to arise from this preliminary analysis of the development of the NUTGW in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s are those to do with the comparatively high levels of membership and participation among women shirt workers: was sectarianism not as big a problem as the traditional marxists suggest? And what distinguished women workers in Derry from their counterparts in the British clothing industry? However, before these general theoretical questions can be addressed, it is necessary to consider the conjunctural factors underlying the fluctuations in union membership during the period.

Having attached so much theoretical importance to the actor's point of view, it is fitting that I should begin my discussion by examining the experiences of, and explanations offered by, my respondents. A few introductions are therefore required. Four of my 'strategic' sample of respondents were women factory workers; all began working in the shirt industry at the age of 14. One, Miss Cosgrave, began work in 1926; two, Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson, began work in the 1930s; and one, Miss McMorris, began work in the early 1940s. Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher joined the union in the 1930s; Mrs Henderson and Miss McMorris in the 1940s. Thus, although none of the women are aware of the inter-union wrangles of the 1920s - Miss Gallagher and Miss Cosgrave knew the first organisation which they joined only as the 'Tailor and Garment Workers' Union' - their collective experience covers the period under investigation in this chapter. They also cover the religious and political spectrum: Miss Cosgrave and Miss McMorris are Catholics and nationalist in outlook; Miss Gallagher is also a Catholic, but pro-British in outlook; Mrs Henderson is a Protestant and a Unionist. In addition to these women I will also draw on the experiences and recollections of Jack Macgougan, the Irish regional organiser of the NUTGW 1945-68; Stephen McGonagle, the secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW from 1947; Seamus Quinn, deputy organiser of the

breakaway union established in 1952, George Hamill, an ATGWU official 1950-1976; and Mr Matthews, one of the shirt cutters in my sample who began working in the industry in 1926. Each of these men have also been included in my 'strategic' sample (see Appendix 1).

When asked, none of my female respondents mentioned religious and political divisions as having any great significance in the union's development during the 1930s and 1940s; sectarianism was a problem which they associated with the 1950s and the secession of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. They tended to explain the fluctuations in membership of the 1930s and 1940s in terms of other factors. In section 4.2, I will examine my respondents' experiences, recollections, and explanations, and attempt to locate them in the context of the organisational structure of the NUTGW and the development of the shirt industry as revealed in the documentary record of the period. Having done this it becomes possible to consider the reasons why union densities and levels of participation among women were comparatively high. It is generally agreed among labour historians that the main reasons for the underdevelopment of trade unionism among women workers relates to their position in the family and the ideologies which surround it. Therefore, in section 4.3 I will re-examine the development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW against the background of available information about the family in Derry.

In section 4.4 I will reconsider the question of sectarianism. For although sectarianism did not feature in my female respondents' own explanations of union development in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, a close examination of their experiences, their more discursive recollections, and a cross-referencing of both with documentary evidence relating to the composition of the NUTGW at different times reveals a striking pattern of sectarian differentiation in union participation. A pattern which is confirmed and illuminated by the recollections of the union officials appointed after 1945.

4.2 Fluctuations in Union Membership: the Institutional Context

All my female respondents were aware that union membership in the shirt factories had been at a low level in the 1930s and that it had improved dramatically in the late 1940s. Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher, who were members of the NUTGW in the 1930s and the 1940s, explained the transformation of the union in terms of the contrasting abilities of the two people who held the post of organising secretary in the period. Sarah Doherty was the organising secretary until 1947, Stephen McGonagle was her successor. Miss Cosgrave, who worked in the Rosemount factory from 1926 to the mid 1960s, told me:

There wasn't a big membership in Sarah Doherty's time. And there was no such a thing as when Stephen got in, the way he organised it with meetings and all, and the committee meetings and the general meetings. I wouldn't say those meetings were in existence, there would have been general meetings, but not the way it was organised when Stephen went into it.

Evidently not wishing to denigrate Doherty, she added,

she was quite good you know. If you went to her with a complaint she really went to town on it and investigated it and did her best. Sarah was quite good, but she didn't have the same drive as what Stephen had. She didn't go round to visit [the factories] she only went if you had a complaint.

Miss Gallagher, who worked in Richard's factory ('Ritchie's') from 1931 to 1940 and again in 1948/49 before moving to Harrison's where she worked until she retired in 1974, told me,

There wasn't a great organisation then [in the 1930s] because it was a woman the name of Sarah Doherty and she only had pockets of members here and there and they weren't as organised... I don't think she even had an office. When she was near retiring it began to come you were asked were you in a union... They said the employers didn't want a union... they [the women] were afraid of their jobs... In Ritchie's we joined the union and then it faded out again until something happened and there was a dispute about the [wage] increase, about working, or so many going to be paid off, and that sort of strengthened it again. When Stephen [McGonagle] took over, it began to come together. Even in Harrison's when I went in, there was some in the union, some then not in the union, it didn't matter you see. But my brother always said to me, 'you make sure you're in the union,' and this is why when the break up (ie the secession of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in 1952) took place I nearly hit the ceiling, because he [McGonagle] wanted to take us lock, stock, and barrel right over.

As will become apparent, both of these assessments are shrewd, but from a social scientific perspective they are not sufficient to explain the fluctuations in membership among Derry's shirtmakers: by attaching so much weight to the contrasting abilities and personalities of Doherty and McGonagle both women fail to appreciate important differences in the structural and institutional contexts in which these two local secretaries worked - differences which inhibited the work of the former but facilitated the work of the latter. What were these differences? As Poole (1984: 1, 16, and 190) suggests, the 'determinants of fluctuations in so-called "aggregate" unionism in any given society' have been well researched. He notes that several studies indicate an association between trade union membership and the business cycle. Several aspects of the latter seem to be important, but none more so than employment levels and labour market conditions. Other studies suggest that the institutional aspects of trade unionism and industrial relations are also of crucial importance, particularly the development of collective bargaining and the 'recognition' policies of government and employers' organisations towards trade unionism (see also Clegg, 1976). The factors which underlie fluctuations in membership at local branch level have not been so well researched, but the variables which Poole lists as the main 'determinants' of union growth at aggregate level also seem to have been important in the case of Derry Branch of the NUTGW. In this section I will seek to locate my respondents' recollections in the context of the organisational development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW, and to relate both to changing labour market conditions in the local shirt industry and to the changing relationship between union officials and the shirt manufacturers. I will begin with the labour market conditions. '4'

First, let us review what has already been established about labour market conditions in the shirt industry during the period under consideration (see section 2.2). In the 1920s and 1930s the shirt workforce was significantly smaller than it was to become in the years during and after the Second World War (or had been during the First World War). In the 1920s and 1930s the shirt workforce fluctuated between 4 and 5,000. In the 1940s it fluctuated

around 7,000. Moreover, within the context of the lower over-all level of employment in the 1920s and 1930s, those jobs which were available in the factories were unstable, and workers were subject to periodic lay offs and short-time working. By contrast the years between about 1943 to 1951 were a period of uninterrupted growth in employment.

The difficulties for union organisers created by the unemployment and periodic lay offs in the 1920s and 1930s were the subject of regular comment in the monthly journals of the UGW and the ASTT and in the meetings of the Derry Branch of the latter. The following are some examples. Two national officers of the ASTT spoke at an organising meeting in Derry in April 1923; they reported that there was, 'every prospect of the Branch regaining its old position when trade revives' (Journal of ASTT September 1923). The second example is a report on the 'Londonderry Branch' published in the Garment Worker (April 1926):

Trade is now much better, we have no members on the unemployed list, and for that reason before the next unemployment slump comes along I want to ask our members to please observe a few rules which will help themselves and help office administration...

During the last slump in employment the office has been besieged with members who have taken no trouble to provide themselves with their cards, also by many lapsed members.

In our endeavour to build up the organisation we have been somewhat indulgent with our members, and have seen them through their difficulties, even when they had become slack in their membership... but... our members are taking too much for granted and assuming that the union will always be there to help them. I want to drive it home as powerfully as I can that a Trade Union exists on the contributions of its members, and is not by any means a glorified benevolent society just waiting for indifferent workers to come along and get them out of their troubles...

We have made it easy for members to retain their membership by allowing cards to be remitted during the period of unemployment, there is no hardship therefore in the foregoing words.

We welcome our members to the office when they are unemployed, they are still our members, and can always have our advice and help.

According to the Garment Worker (GW: July 1928), the Derry shirt trade experienced another particularly bad spell in 1928. At the end of the year Edward McCafferty, the newly appointed Irish organiser of the UGW, reported that the Derry shirt trade was coming out of a long

period of

slackness... I spent a few days there organising and attending to members' grievances. I hope when members get back to work again that they will help shop stewards to get their old strength back. Shops become disorganised during unemployment as members are out of touch with stewards and fail to have their cards remitted during slackness... the result is arrears and... that members drop out of the union. (GW: November 1928).

In March 1932 Sarah Doherty reported:

During the past month, trade has not been good here, although a couple of the leading firms have been kept fairly busy... Most of the other firms have not been doing well, but an improvement is expected before Easter, particularly as new designs in men's shirts and collars are to be placed upon the market.

Owing to the scarcity of employment, considerable apathy exists among the workers with regard to trade unionism. They do not seem to realise that the period of bad trade is the most dangerous time for wage earners, and is the time of all others when they should rally to their union. We are at present engaged in an organising campaign, and we have been billing the factories, and hope that this will have a good effect. (GW: March 1932).

Sarah Doherty's hopes that trade would improve and that the organising campaign would have 'good effect' were not to be fulfilled: at a meeting of the Branch Committee later in the year it was agreed that 'owing to bad trade there was not much chance of getting workers to join up' (Minutes: 9 June 1932). Thereafter, the minutes of Committee meetings and Branch reports in the union journal become increasingly sparse until the 1940s when Branch membership began to revive. It is significant that none of the minutes and Branch reports pertaining to the 1940s mention unemployment as an organisational problem.

In explaining the contrast between union weakness in the 1930s and union strength in the late 1940s in terms of the different abilities of Doherty and McGonagle, Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher were also unaware of the very different institutional contexts in which these two organising secretaries operated. During the early 1930s the union's network of full-time officials in Ireland had been allowed to fall apart, and it was not until after 1945 that it was reconstructed. Annie Holmes the UGW's full-time organiser in Derry was transferred to the Cheshire Branch of the union at the end of 1929; she was not replaced. Edward McCafferty, who had been

appointed as Irish regional organiser of the UGW in 1928, either resigned or was made redundant in August 1931; he was not replaced. As the reader already knows, Sarah Doherty was appointed full-time organising secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW after the amalgamation of the UGW and ASTT in 1932. However, despite the opposition of the Branch Committee, she was made redundant in February or March 1934 (her last report in the Garment Worker was April 1934). She continued as Branch secretary on a purely voluntary basis. After 1934 the NUTGW had no full-time organiser at local or regional level.

Between April 1934 and November 1938 there were only two recruitment campaigns; both were carried out by English based officials on 'flying visits' to Ireland. I have already mentioned Mr P. Hodson's campaign in September 1935 when he reported that 'very few of the Derry shirt workers are in the trade union' (GW: November 1935). Another recruitment drive was carried out by Mr P. Burns - NUTGW organiser in the Yorkshire and Northumberland area - in the summer and autumn of 1937. He claimed to have 'secured nearly 3,000 members' in Belfast, Coleraine, and Derry (GW: October 1937). This claim is almost certainly inflated; Macgougan expressed doubt about its accuracy, and affectionately described Burns as 'a great bluffer, one of the old school.' In any case, on the evidence presented above, this level of membership was not sustained in Derry or elsewhere.

Union activists continued to represent Derry shirt workers at Trade Board level throughout this period, but workplace negotiations were rudimentary and with little union involvement. An apposite example of this general lack of consultation between managers and union representatives is provided by the introduction of conveyor belts to some factories in the early 1930s. It is apposite because it contrasts sharply with the way in which time and motion study - the second major innovation in methods of production and payment in the industry - was introduced in the late 1940s. The latter will be discussed later in this section.

Prior to the introduction of conveyor belts the commonest method of production and payment was piecework. In a piecework system

A price is set for each unit of output produced or for each operation performed by an individual or a group of workers. Thus gross weekly earnings depend on the level of piece-rates, and the amount of work completed in a week. (Manpower Working Party of the Clothing EDC, 1972: 3).

Shirtmakers were not given a quota of work which they had to complete in a given time, they were simply paid according to the number of items, usually calculated in dozens, which they produced. Conveyor belts involved a different method of production and payment. The conveyor or 'speed bench' was 'manned by teams of 14... [and] the shirt was passed from one worker to another until completed' (GW: February 1934). Unlike piecework, workers were expected to do a set amount of work: they had to work to the pace set by the belt rather than at their own speed, and they were paid a set 'time' rate. According to Sarah Doherty:

The team system which is being introduced in some factories is causing friction; the workers are only being paid the bare minimum rate of 7d per hour. They themselves are partly to blame for the unsatisfactory conditions imposed [my emphasis] by some firms and there will be no improvement in the conditions of working until the workers individually and collectively realise that their only safeguard lies in being members of a recognised trade union. (GW: March 1933).

Another perspective on the introduction of the 'speed belt' is provided by Miss Cosgrave. I asked her if she had been involved in any strikes in the 1930s, she replied:

No. The biggest upheaval, I can't name the year, [was] when they started the speed belts. It would be in the 1930s. A lot of resentment then, but there was so much unemployment, male unemployment, in the town that they just had to take it and bear with it and do their work and do the amount they had to do because they had no alternative. Because most of the women... were married and their husbands wasn't working and there was no such thing as social security there.

According to Miss Cosgrave the main problem with the 'speed belt' was that 'they [the workers] had a target and they had to do that target, if not they were paid off.'

Nor was the union involved in negotiations about more routine industrial relations problems:

We were in the union, but didn't bother much about it. If there was something wrong, if we had something to complain

about, a couple of the girls would go and see the manager. The rest of us stopped work while they talked. They usually managed to get it fixed up and we went back to work in an hour or so. (anonymous shirtmaker quoted by E.G. Deans, 1975)

An even bleaker picture was described by Mrs Cosgrave,

Now, at that time, before Stephen [McGonagle] came along... it was all just piecework and it was whatever the girl earned: the rate for the job. Now, in the Rosemount factory nobody discussed a rate for the job, the manager made the rate and you could either take it or leave it. He made the rate, and it was up to you... if you wanted to do it you did it, and if you didn't want to do it you could go home - as simple as that.

The lack of a full-time local official clearly inhibited the union in the performance of its major role: collective bargaining. But, the evidence suggests that employer hostility was also an obstacle to organisation. The hostility of employers to the first attempt by shirt factory workers to organise themselves was discussed in section 3.2. Several of my respondents indicated that the opposition of employers to trade unions was still a factor in the 1920s and 1930s. Mr Matthews who joined the ATGWU as an apprentice cutter in 1926 told me that the cutters in his factory,

were expected [by the other cutters] to be in a union... you were told, 'you can't stay on in here if [you do not join a union]...'... This was all done under cover, they [journeymen cutters] would say to you, 'don't you be discussing this with any of the bosses... if your asked any questions just... play the game as if you know nothing about it.' But... I was never challenged by a boss.

Miss Gallagher has already been quoted as saying 'they [her workmates] said the employers didn't want a union... they were afraid of their jobs'. And according to Miss Cosgrave

If you were caught paying the union you would've got the sack maybe. They [management] were death on the union. It wasn't till later years - let me say this, I would say Stephen McGonagle made the trade union in Derry.

She thought that the trade unions would have maintained an effective presence in two or three of the larger factories in the 1930s:

Tillie's, the City, and Harrison's... I'm not so sure that the smaller factories would have had much to do with the union up to Stephen's time [because the] workers were so well used, let us put it this [way], with the heel of the boot on the back of their neck that they didn't realise that they could've come out and fought against it or rebelled against it. Thats my theory.

In 1938, the Executive Committee of the NUTGW took steps to rebuild its organisational infrastructure in Ireland. In November of that year an Irish regional organiser, Terence Waldron, was appointed. According to the Garment Worker (November 1938),

The appointment of an organiser for Eire and the North of Ireland has been a subject for consideration by the Executive Board from time to time during recent years when paying regard to the numerical position of the organisation.

Macgougan told me that Waldron was from Dublin, had previously been the 'secretary of a sick pay scheme,' and was active in the ITUC. In May 1939 Sarah Doherty was re-appointed as organising secretary of the Derry Branch .

Waldron's appointment was not a success: he was less than diligent in his work and he was sacked at the beginning of 1944 (GW: February 1944). According to Macgougan who had met him at several ITUC functions:

he wasn't doing his job. He was transferred from Dublin to Belfast because Dublin at that time a big agitation was going on to be in an Irish based union; and Belfast, the organisation was negligible. He came up on a Monday morning from Dublin and went away on a Thursday evening sort-of-style. The Executive appointed a delegation... [to] survey the potential [for expansion in Ireland]. Dame Anna Loughlin, then national organiser [and part of the delegation]... said 'we'll go to the Albion' - the biggest employer and fair core of membership [in Belfast] - he couldn't find it! [laughs] That was one of the nails in his coffin. He was a great character, a Dublin Man.

Doherty made more impact at a local level than Waldron had done at a national or regional level: regular Branch Committee meetings were instituted and the minutes of these meetings report her involvement in negotiations concerning day to day problems at plant level. Moreover, as was pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, membership was increased. However, Macgougan's recollection of his first experience of Derry after his appointment as Irish organiser in 1945 partly confirms the assessment made by Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher which was quoted earlier. He described membership at this time as falsely 'inflated'; the Branch Committee as 'only a little clique around Sarah Doherty'; and Sarah Doherty herself as 'a very nice old woman, but only a bookkeeper - she didn't

do any organising.' Furthermore - something which my female informants did not appreciate - Doherty was only,

part-time, well, full part-time: she'd no other job. The part-time secretaries were paid on commission... [but] she had a flat rate because her membership wasn't good enough. I think it was £4.00 per week... at that time a tradesman's wages would have been £5.

By associating the decline of the union in the 1930s with Doherty and the rise in membership of the late 1940s with McGonagle, Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher fail to acknowledge the changes wrought in the union at local and regional level by Macgougan. In Miss Cosgrave's case this omission reflects a hostility to Macgougan which has its roots in the secession of the Derry Branch Committee in 1952. Miss Gallagher's failure to recall the impact made by Macgougan probably reflects the fact that she was not working in the industry during the year - 1946 - when Macgougan was most active in Derry. In July 1945 Macgougan initiated a series of organising campaigns in all centres of the clothing industry throughout Northern Ireland; his intention was to build up NUTGW membership in particular districts to a point where it would be viable to employ local full-time organising secretaries. In Derry he promoted the union not just through the usual meetings at factory gates, but by organising dances and competitions in which female shirt workers competed for the title of 'Shirt Queen.' The criteria for the latter seem to have been a combination of personality, union commitment, and beauty; the judges were drawn from the local press. And it was in Derry that he had his biggest success: 'Londonderry continues to be a most fruitful soil for recruiting' (GW: August 1945). Prior to his appointment, NUTGW membership in Derry was 800, at most; in July 1946 it was 2,144. Macgougan claims the credit for this success: he told me that he spent a lot of time in Derry during his first two years as Irish organiser,

because I found it easier to organise there. They were sitting there waiting to be brought in. I very quickly got 2,000 and 3,000 members, and it was at that stage the union decided to appoint a Branch secretary for Derry, that was when McGonagle was appointed.

This claim is supported by the documentary record. At a Branch meeting in December 1945 Miss Doherty reported an increase in membership of 836,

these increases are due to the untiring efforts of Mr Macgougan... Credit [is also due] to the chairman and Committee who had assisted in the campaign.

However, Macgougan readily conceded that McGonagle was effective in consolidating and building upon this initial success.

The appointment of younger, more dynamic, and, most importantly, full-time organisers was clearly one of the factors contributing to the spectacular growth in union membership among women shirtmakers in the late 1940s. Equally important was the advent of a major change in the methods of production and payment in a large part of the Derry shirt industry between 1948 and 1953. This was known locally as 'work study', 'time and motion', or 'time and study'. Although work study techniques were applied in only three of the city's 30 factories at this time - Harrison's; McIntyre, Hogg, and Marsh; and McCarthy's - the effects were disproportionate: these were three of the largest factories in the city with at least 1,500 workers between them, and their owners were among the most influential members of the SMF. The importance of this innovation from the point of view of union organisation was twofold. First, it was associated with a significant change in the relationship between union and management. It has been shown that in the 1930s management were characteristically hostile to trade unions, that when the conveyor system was introduced to some factories in the 1930s there was little or no consultation with the local union official, and that even in routine matters negotiation between union and management was not highly developed. By contrast, when work study was introduced the union was involved in unprecedented discussions with management, and the union official was given unfettered access to the workplace thereby facilitating organisation. Second, despite the unpopularity of work study - and of the union official's enthusiastic response to it - among the women workers its novelty made them even more dependent on the union as the only guarantor of their interests.

According to Macgougan, the NUTGW was 'totally unprepared' for both the application of work study techniques to shirt production in Derry and the changes in the methods of production and payment which followed. McGonagle, who had to deal with the problems it created, was scathing about the amount of support he received from the union,

'they sent me a penny pamphlet.' In order to cope with the changes McGonagle did alot of research into work study techniques, and he used this research and his experience to write an article for Christus Rex (1951; the article was reprinted in Liberty, February 1954). For the sake of clarity it is necessary to detail the changes in production and payment which followed work study before examining the associated changes in relationships between management and union official and between union official and lay membership. In what follows I will draw on McGonagle's published description (the page references relate to the Liberty reprint) and the recollections of those of my informants who experienced the changes.

The industrial consultants who introduced work study techniques were known locally as the 'time and motion men' or 'work study men'; some of my respondants said they were American, others said they were English. According to McGonagle,

after having replanned the department, re-deployed labour teams and machines, introduced guides and gadgets to assist operators, the time study man proceeds to study the individual operations of the worker. (1954: 49).

On the basis of this study and of 'his judgement and experience,' the time and motion man defined the time it would take a 'normal' operative to complete a particular task. On the basis of this, and allowing for fatigue and contingencies, a 'standard value' is determined; that is:

the time required by the normal worker to complete a unit of work specified. The whole structure is based on time values, the dozens of work used in the piece rate system being now expressed as so many units, one unit being the standard amount of work to be produced in one minute. (1954: 50).

Using these standard values an incentive payment scheme was worked out.

There are 480 minutes, therefore units, in an 8 hour day. A worker who has credited to her 480 units is said to have operated at 100 per cent, or normal... In setting up the wages structure under the application of of the results of work study it was agreed that payment for 100 per cent or normal production should be the Wages Council basic rate plus 33 1/3 per cent. Three principal reasons were advanced in support of this:

1. It was considered a living wage and a fair return for the production.
2. ... that figure [is] the average wage in the shirt industry

3. This figure was necessary to give the operators a share of the increased production. (1954: 50-51)..

Workers who were credited at more than 100% (normal production) were paid a bonus.

According to McGonagle:

It has been found that actual motion study of shirt machining is less necessary than the handling of work between operatives, since years of work under piece rate conditions had largely eliminated unnecessary movements on the part of the worker. (1954: 50).

However, according to the women I spoke to, motion study had a profound effect on particular operations. Mrs Henderson - who was generally in favour of work study and was, as will be shown, very involved in its introduction to McCarthy's factory - told me,

the shirt was cut down to very small pieces; I mean there was a girl sewing on a label, a girl doing yokes, that was ridiculous like, that was all in the 'fitting' [ie the one job specification] previous.

I asked, 'particular operations were broken down?' Mrs Henderson replied,

Oh, I couldn't tell you how many parts, there was the label and the yokes - two, three, four, five, six - oh, there must have been about 12 or 13 parts of a shirt were one or two girls would have done it before.

I asked her whether this involved any diminution in an operative's skill; she replied:

Very much so. Oh, I mean front stitching was nothing compared to what it was in the old days... all that was done was it was turned over like that there [showing me the hem of her dress] and pressed with an iron. In the old days you had to put in inters [ie linings], double fronts was set on... [the shirt] was skimped [after work study].

Another aspect of the system of production and payment ushered in by work study which is not mentioned by McGonagle is that the standard values or 'normals' established by the work study consultant for the new, simplified, operations required the women to work harder and faster than before. Mrs Henderson who prided herself on being a fast worker - 'I was a 130% worker, I never went below 130, but I had to work hard' - felt that the pace of work increased, and contrasted the new system to working on conveyors: in the conveyor system,

a certain amount went down the line and you had to do it, so many dozen, but conveyor work was nothing compared to work study. You finished [the quota] and you could have

sat and knit or you could have made patch work quilts or you could have done anything... everybody had a set wage... some of them [ie the faster girls] made patch work quilts... that's why I say conveyor work was nothing compared with work study. In work study every second counted.

Other women did not adapt so easily as Mrs Henderson. Miss McMorris is one example. She began working in Harrison's as an unqualified office clerk, but her mother pressurised her to take a job in the factory where she could learn an easily transferable skill, and so she became a folder of finished shirts. She remained in the job until the late 1960s when she transferred to the Rosemount factory. She was in Harrison's when work study was introduced, 'the whole place became time study and then the job was halved... if you and I were doing it up, you folded them and I pressed them.' I asked her how she felt about work study; she replied:

Oh terrific, everything changed drastically, [it] probably was good for me, but it never appealed to me. The whole thing where I was so easy, it [work] was so easy... and then to an awful lot of pressure, physical. I was probably using more physical strength, there was a knack of being quick, but I hardly achieved that knack. There was some people could do it and never were exhausted at all, whereas I would have nearly fainted... [under time and motion you had to work] much faster. And then I wanted back to the original [clerical] job, but on account of the manager relationship and... [my family's] friendship [with him], I couldn't ask him, [and] there was another girl in it... I wanted back - now that I knew the folding - to the desk job

Women who did not have, or could not learn, the 'knack' or skill of working at the speed required to be 'normal' lost their job. According to Mrs Henderson:

Work study was ideal for the quick worker, but the old worker that was used individually working, it was a dead loss to her, because she had to hit 75%, and if that girl didn't hit it her job was lost... the girls that brought the work from the cutting room and the girls who tied the work up, they were called 'indirects,' they were paid [from] the bonus of the room and the room was ran at 100% all over. So if anybody [worked] at 75%, that didn't pay them to pay indirect workers. They had to hit that to keep their job.

The result was that some older women left the factory,

ones couldn't take it... they hadn't the speed, it's your hands with work study, it's not brains or anything like that.

Thus, work study involved not just a radical change in methods of production and payment, but a dramatic upheaval for a considerable number of shirt workers; it was an experience which loomed large in the memories of many of the women I spoke to. It is, therefore, not surprising that work study should have had a significant affect on relations between workers, union officials, and managment; it is to these that I shall now turn.

There is some evidence that the relationship between some local shirt manufacturers and NUTGW officials began to improve prior to the introduction of work study. As I pointed out earlier, representatives of the union and of the SMF met at Trade Board level in the 1930s to discuss minimum piece-rates for the industry, but they did not meet locally to discuss their implementation. Macgougan claims, 'I developed meetings with the local trade association which didn't exist before.' During his first organising campaign in Derry he was not usually allowed into factories - meetings were conducted at factory gates. Harrison's was an exception. Macgougan recalls that he developed a good relationship with Arthur Harrison, the managing director: 'Arthur came back from the Army with alot of bright ideas, progressive ideas.' For whatever reason⁽⁵⁾, other shirt manufacturers seem to have become imbued by this 'progressive' spirit: at an NUTGW Branch Committee meeting in June 1948 Miss Moore - one of the longest serving members on the Committee - described a meeting with the SMF as being a 'step forward in recognition for the Derry Branch when all the employers in the city met the union in this way.'

However, the introduction of work study was a watershed in union-management relations. Prior to the deployment of a work study team in Harrison's - it was the first factory to employ them - McGonagle was invited to talks with management and the industrial consultant. The extent of subsequent co-operation is evident in McGonagle's published account:

The trade union operating in this particular industry co-operated to the fullest extent in making this experiment... a success, and at the same time, safeguarding the wages and conditions of the workers, as is its proper function. The well informed trade unionist realises how important it is to encourage or support schemes of efficiency in the production of consumer goods. The conditions laid down by

the union in this case were very clear and definite: access from the start for their officials to all departments for full investigation of every phase of the operations; examination of all study sheets and element charts; the trade union officer to be allowed to undertake time studies and production studies on any standard values produced; all findings to be tabled to the trade union before they were applied; typed specifications of every job under the application (included in these, speed of machines in R.P.M. and stitches per inch) to be handed to the Union and posted on notice boards in the departments; agreement for money payment to be reached between the management and the union. (1954: 50-51).

McGonagle was careful to avoid the impression that this level of co-operation meant the incorporation of the union by management, for he continued:

Time study men occupy a merely advisory capacity in this last matter. The standard values when agreed to by the union cannot be altered except by a change in method of production. This agreed clause alone smashes the charge that the employer can cut rates, as he might have done under the old piece rate system... The material results, analysed after almost two years, are considered satisfactory by all parties. More important, *the relationship between management and workers is improved and everything points to it staying that way* [my emphasis]. The pin-pricking causes of industrial friction and misunderstanding have been to a great extent removed. Each side realises the advantages of having a sharply defined procedure for dealing with problems of production and payment... Work study brought both sides closer together and the responsibilities that had to be faced up to were printed in unmistakable language. (1954: 51).

Further confirmation of the change in union-management relations associated with work study is provided by the recollections of George Hamill, local ATGWU official with responsibility for shirt cutters and long-time friend of McGonagle:

He [McGonagle] made his name with the employers aswell, because he sold the work study to the workers and he done a great job for the employers aswell. It wasn't because he had any liking for the employers, he felt - like a good many forward thinking people, you haven't enough [of them] in the trade union [movement] - he felt [the] introduction of new technology and new methods and so forth that you're going to have to accept them if you're going to compete in the international market, to hold on to your orders... As well as that, he thought it was a fairer system of bonus payments than they had on the old rule-by-thumb sort-of-style of fixing a [piece] rate for so many dozen.

Thus, it is clear that, unlike Doherty, both Macgougan and McGonagle had the kind of access to the workplace and to management - especially in those factories where work study was introduced - which facilitates organisation and recruitment. However, the following question remains: what effect did work study, and McGonagle's close identification with it, have on the attitude of women workers to the NUTGW?

As McGonagle was ready to concede, his enthusiasm for work study was not shared by the women who were subject to it:

It would be untrue to say that the shirt workers hailed the scheme with joy at the start. The record of the shirt industry in years gone by is not good. It was a sweated industry, one for which it was found necessary to set up a Trade Board. That in itself is sufficient condemnation of the conditions and also a display of the failure of the workers to organise themselves. Those conditions are gone but tradition dies hard. The workers saw in this 'new business' an effort on the part of the employers to steal away their bargaining power and cut their piece rates by camouflage. They were wrong. In the first place the new scheme of things is introduced by a third party, a business firm, who cannot afford to run foul either of the employers or the trade union... Secondly, the bargaining power for payment is retained by the trade union. (1954: 49).

Assurances like this did not assuage the fears and suspicions of the women. Band stitchers in the City factory (McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh and Co.) - which introduced work study techniques shortly after Harrison's - refused to accept the wage rate which McGonagle had recommended. One Committee member, Miss McLaughlin, is reported (Minute: 26 September 1948) to have said 'band stitchers knew more about the job than the secretary and the rate he recommended would not pay them.' McGonagle replied that,

the matter was finished as the firm had gone back to the old system. But if the trade union was to hold its prestige it must avoid the ridiculous position like that created in this case. Piece rates must of necessity be atleast tried.

Most of the Committee supported McGonagle's position. At a meeting in November 1948, the Committee discussed the progress of the new system in Harrison's factory. Mrs Darcy reported that her daughter did not like the system, but added that she was satisfied with the secretary's assurance that even the slowest worker could earn more than under the old system. Julia Kelly supported McGonagle, saying

that she 'detested the conveyor belt as unnatural and that in itself was justification for its removal.' The Committee approved 'any scheme' for the abolition of the conveyor system. In October 1949, however, workers in Harrison's shirt, white collar, and coloured collar rooms struck in opposition to the new system and refused to permit the secretary to carry out his own 'production study' (Minute: 2 October 1949).

Miss Cosgrave did not experience work study for herself but she was a member of the Branch Committee in the late 1940s, and told me that when it was introduced,

there was murder, there was strikes, and I couldn't tell you what not... Harrison's, Hogg and McIntyre's [ie the City factory], McCarthy's, Tillie's [work study was not introduced in Tillie and Henderson's factory until the mid 1950s]... he [McGonagle] got alot of stick. One time he went up to McCarthy's, and he was walking up the floor, they started to sing 'if we'd known you were coming we'd have baked you a cake' [Miss Cosgrave attached no special significance to this song other than it being generally derogatory]. That man took a terrible lot of stick from the Derry girls.

Mrs Henderson has a keen recollection of the introduction of work study to McCarthy's factory. Work study consultants did not go into McCarthy's factory until 1953 (though it was first mooted in 1951). By this time the Derry Branch of the NUTGW had split. Mrs Henderson's feelings about work study and McGonagle's role in its introduction are tied up with a distaste for his behaviour during the split. These different aspects will be disentangled in a later chapter; for the moment we are concerned only with her recollections of work study. I asked her, 'which aspects of work study did your work mates dislike?' She replied,

The whole outlook. Everybody was against it at the time. It was the unknown... Mr Lowry [the factory manager] turned round and said, 'I'm introducing this new layout and I can guarantee you'll have a pound or maybe £2 more in your pay envelope.' Well I says, 'if thats the case I don't see why we shouldn't work it,' and that started an awful uproar in the factory when I said that. But it was a fact, if we were only earning only 30 shillings then or maybe £2 you were going to get an extra £1 or £2, as he put it, for nothing. Well, I couldn't turn round and say, 'well we're not going to take it.' I spoke up and said, 'if thats the case I don't see why we shouldn't work it,'... they struck and all, over it. The girls refused to work it. And that was when ne [Mr Lowry] explained it... everything was

stopped and [he] got us all together and that was the start of it [ie work study].

Despite the women's suspicion of work study and of McGonagle's enthusiasm for it, union membership did not suffer. Indeed, McGonagle consolidated and built on the gains made by Macgougan. One answer to this apparent paradox was supplied by Miss Gallagher:

They had a conveyor belt in Harrison's and they [the workers] would verse it that this English man was over... time and study... and that sort of woke them up to the fact that half of them were in no union... so they all had to get their wits about them. I wasn't in Harrison's at that particular time, but I was told about it when I went in... but they said Stephen let them down badly on that occasion. Whatever Stephen done, he wasn't in great favour at that particular time... Well, of course it was progress and it was coming and... I suppose he knew it was going to have to [be accepted]... Definitely, it did [make women more trade union minded], because they knew they had to have some help, some advice because factory girls in those days weren't very well versed. You left school at 14 and you weren't just at that stage where you could cope with percentages... and this was why whenever they started the union that they tried to entice people to go and have a course [of education]... but they weren't well versed and they had to depend on the union... The older people, whenever Mr Greenan [department manager] used to come with the clipboard, [they said], 'I don't know what he's talking about there.'... He was very straight forward... he was very understanding, but they used to go to pieces when he would come. One [women] thought she was doing the right thing and she would go slow and stop and you tried to advise them like just work normally... [according to] your aptitude, everybody's different. Then some of them would go like lightning - the nerves got the better of them - and [later] they would say he's [Mr Greenan] got the wrong reading. But he always explained it to them afterwards.

According to Mrs Cosgrave,

it took a long time... for Stephen to get through to them that the time and motion was for their benefit, but at the beginning some of them couldn't see it, but then they realised it.

And despite the difficulties experienced by some women in meeting the production targets set by the work study men, it is true that the new system brought some improvements. According to McGonagle,

The trade union has performed its function so successfully that earnings are considerably ahead of Wages Council basic rates... The operatives are also guaranteed the basic wage per hour [ie the Wages Council basic rate] irrespective of output. This was considered a progressive measure for the industry since no guarantee of any kind existed up to that. This also covers lost time and machine breakdowns, every

minute of which must be logged and paid for... From the union's point of view if they had made a good agreement for payment at 100 per cent, then 125 per cent or 130 per cent was very good. A steady reasonable production over long periods - and the worker's life is fairly long - is much more beneficial for her than short bursts of high production in between lay off periods due to overwork. (1954: 51).

Mrs Henderson's experience suggests another answer to the paradox. She began to take greater interest in union work precisely because she disliked the way in which Stephen McGonagle had dealt with work study. She told me that it 'was more or less when this work study started that I took a serious view of the union then.' In a later interview she elaborated further:

What made me really take on the union work was Stephen McGonagle - his attitude. And I says... you're not going to climb over me and... he's not going to come in here and fool the girls because he really sided with that [work study], and he really went all out for that at the time and we didn't know anything about it. And then when he came up then and he started talking about it and all... you had to produce then 495 units per day and that was your minutes and I wanted to know... I put these [points] to Stephen McGonagle, I says, 'well, if we work 495 units a day and if we have to produce 495 units, where's our breaks, and where's this, and where's that and I think that.' He couldn't answer me then. I mind him lifting a paper like that [gesture of him hitting her face with a sheet of paper], he says, 'you're too smart for me.' I thought I'd question him because I knew that there was something about Stephen McGonagle: he was a great man with the bosses and at the same time he wasn't straight with the girls.

Moreover, she felt that work study encouraged more women in her factory to join the union,

Oh, it definitely did, it was through that it did grow. Because when I went into McCarthy's at the start I think you could have counted them on your hand - the union members in it. But it definitely grew in fact around all the factories... it went into.

Mrs Henderson became an NUTGW shop steward in 1954. It is worth recording her recollection of the time she devoted to dealing with problems created by the new methods of production and payment because it reinforces my earlier points about how their novelty increased workers' dependence on informed advice and how the amelioration in union-management relations facilitated the work of trade union representatives in the workplace.

Two Americans came in and they introduced it [work study] and then they took me into their confidence and they asked me would I like to learn it and I said I'd be interested in it and it went from that then on... It was an awful lot of work, it was very, I was mentally tired with it because I was everywhere... you were round every department because the girls was all put-out about it and they couldn't understand it. There was weeks I came out with no pay at all hardly [she was compensated by the union]. At one time Lowry [the factory manager] took me aside and said to me, 'would this not have to stop because,' he said, 'you're not doing any work here at all only union work.' They weren't a bit pleased about it at the time. But I just said to him I says, 'well,' I says, 'when I see things are right and I think that things are going to work right,' I says, 'I'll stop, but not until then because this is unknown to us, we don't know nothing about it.'

To sum up. The structural and institutional factors which feature in the industrial relations literature as the 'determinants' of fluctuations in union membership at aggregate level were clearly important in the case of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. Unemployment and employer hostility clearly made organisation more difficult in the 1930s just as the full employment and the development of specialised collective bargaining following the introduction of work study facilitated recruitment in the 1940s. However, it is equally clear that fluctuations in the membership of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW were crucially influenced by the status of the local organising secretary and the time and resources at his or her disposal. The most important factor in the decline in membership of the NUTGW in the 1930s was the lack of a full-time organiser; conversely, the two full-time officials appointed in 1945 and 1947 were instrumental in the prodigious growth in membership during these years. Miss Cosgrave's and Miss Gallagher's stress on the extent to which union membership was dependent on the local union official is thus partly confirmed. The failure of industrial relations theorists to recognise the role of the local union official in relation to membership levels is, perhaps, not simply a result of their focus on the macro, as opposed to the micro, level, but symptomatic of a general theoretical tendency, noted in section 1.6, to invest structures and institutions with the powers of agency - reification - when it is really only people who act (see also Hyman 1979a: 16).

4.3 Trade Unionism, Female Shirtmakers, and the Family in Derry

Having located the fluctuations in membership of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW during the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s in the context of the union's institutional development and the changing nature of the local shirt industry, I now want to consider why it was that levels of union membership and participation among women shirtmakers in Derry tended to be higher than among women clothing workers elsewhere in the United Kingdom. But before we can understand what was distinctive about Derry, we must first examine some the reasons which have been given for the underdevelopment of trade unionism among women in Britain.

Historians and sociologists of the British trade union movement have tended to neglect women workers (see Bornat, 1977). A similar neglect is also evident in Ireland where, as I have shown, writers like Rolston, Munck, and Patterson refer to women workers, and raise the question of gender differences but never seriously attempt to answer it. Recently, however, a considerable amount of research effort - much of it inspired by feminism and the rise of the women's movement in the 1970s - has been directed towards explaining what Alexander (1980: 141) has characterised as 'women's persistently weak hold on industrial organisation.' The emerging consensus is that women's weak hold on industrial organisation is a consequence of the broader sexual division labour whereby it is - and according to family ideology should be - men who provide for their families' economic well being and women who take responsibility for child care and housework. The relationship between women workers' actual or supposed position in the family and their involvement in trade unionism is complex, but the arguments may be summarised in the following way. One argument is that women themselves are less disposed to union organisation because they are less concerned about their employment and its conditions than they are about their role as wives and mothers or as prospective wives and prospective mothers. For example, Pollert argues (1981: 105) that, in the case of young single women in the tobacco factory which she studied,

The net result of the high turnover, the focus on marriage, the entrenchment in romance, prejudiced the girls' chances of getting to grips with strategies of workplace organisation, just at that time in their lives when they

had the time and the opportunity.

However, it is also recognised that women workers are usually concentrated in precisely those insecure and low paid jobs which make industrial organisation difficult (see Alexander, 1980: 143). But, even if women are disposed to organise in trade unions and are able to surmount the difficulties created by their occupational segregation, they face additional obstacles. First, there are the practical, physical, problems of reconciling the demands of actively participating in a trade union with the demands of housework, child care, and wage labour. Second, women trade unionists often face hostility or indifference on the part of male trade unionists such that their interests are marginalised within the organisation. Some scholars suggest that the hostility or indifference of male trade unionists to their female colleagues is related to the prevalence of family ideology: male trade unionists assume that a woman's proper place is in the home and that if she undertakes paid work her wage is of secondary importance to that of her husband (Charles, 1983: 19). Others suggest that it is related to occupational segregation by sex and the way in which women have, historically, been incorporated into the workforce. In the latter argument women - because of their position in the family - are said to constitute a reserve of cheap labour which has been used by employers to dilute the skilled male labour force; male hostility to women workers is seen as a form of class struggle or resistance (Cockburn, 1983: 151 and passim; see also Beechey, 1983 and Barron and Norris, 1976 for different theories of women's occupational segregation).

Judging from the material already presented in this chapter, the case of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW appears to be at variance to this consensus. As I have already pointed out trade unionism among female shirtmakers in Derry was not underdeveloped: women were always well represented on Branch Committees, and, after 1945, the proportion of the female workforce which was organised was comparatively high. Moreover, although male shirt cutters choose to be organisationally separate from their female colleagues, the two men appointed as NUTGW organisers in the 1940s were patently far from indifferent to the organisation of women shirtmakers. A ready explanation for both of these anomalies seems to be at hand.

As I pointed out in section 2.3, role-reversal between the sexes was popularly believed to have been common among Derry families: the twin notions of the woman shirtmaker as the family breadwinner and the unemployed father/husband as the person responsible for child care and housework has been celebrated in song and cited in many articles about the city. In this section I will re-examine this belief and assess the extent to which it explains the anomalous aspects of union organisation in the shirt industry. The issue of occupational segregation by sex and its effect on relationships between male and female shirt workers will be the subject of the next chapter; it will not, therefore, be further developed here.

None of my sample of union activists and officials, and only one of the many other women shirtmakers whom I talked to in the course of my research, had any personal experience of role-reversal within their extended families; nevertheless, most of them were sure that it was common in Derry. There seems, however, to have been a difference of interpretation between Catholics and Protestants. According to Miss Cosgrave, a Catholic,

There was no work for the men. It was pitiful, and there was no such thing as social security and it was outdoor relief, and you had to be starving before you got outdoor relief. And the women all worked out and the men all looked after the youngsters in the home - that is true.

She did not think that it was as common today:

Not as much as it was then. In the '30s times were very tough. There used to be a coal yard... in the Bogside and the men would have been passing here with a bag of coal on their back because it was half a crown cheaper than if they'd bought it at the door... there wasn't any work for the men... and the women had to go out and work.

Mrs Henderson, a Protestant, agreed:

Ach, gosh, there was hundreds [of shirtmakers] in that [position of being the family breadwinner]. Their men stayed in the house and watched the youngsters and they came out to work... well, I would say after the [Second World] War more so. I think the War started this where women went out to work part-time and then after it [the War] that was kept up... there was no work hardly for men at that time.

However, she added,

although... men didn't go out and look for work. Now, why I can tell you that, I was on the [Social Security] Boards, and the men that came and the excuses they made that they couldn't get work... they had to go out and look for jobs

and they had to bring for to let us see - you'd get a wee chit to say they were there... and the stories they told you they must have thought you were naive. The men didn't seem to want to work... I would say an awful lot done work on the sly.

Some women shirtmakers - particularly those whom I met as part of an adult education group - expressed scepticism about the extent to which the unemployed husbands looked after the children and the home, and suggested that child care was left to grandmothers and aunts.

The popularity of the idea notwithstanding, there is considerable evidence to suggest that it was not especially common for a Derry shirtmaker to be the main family breadwinner. The Londonderry Sentinel (13 January 1971) published a highly critical riposte to Jackson's contentions about men, role-reversal, and violence in Derry (see Jackson, 1979, and section 2.3 of this thesis). The Sentinel article refers to the notion of women-as-breadwinners as a 'legend' or an 'old story', and quotes Seamus Quinn, the local secretary of the ITGWU which organised the majority of unionised shirt workers in the 1950s and 1960s, as saying,

it would be very difficult to find an example of this [ie role-reversal]. The facts of life about supplementary benefit are that if an unemployed man's wife went out to work he could lose most of his benefit.

Lande (1978: 261-262) has pointed out that 'among unemployed men [in the United Kingdom in the 1970s] the overall proportion with wives in paid employment is low'. Like Quinn, she attributes this to a social security system in which an unemployed man's supplementary benefit is reduced to the extent that his wife earns:

there is therefore a substantial incentive for a woman to give up paid work once her husband becomes unemployed, unless she has high enough earnings to maintain the whole family.

The one women shirtmaker whom I met in the course of my research who had personal experience of role-reversal tends to confirm Quinn's and Lande's analysis. She started working in the shirt industry in 1969. A few years prior to the time when I spoke to her, her husband was made redundant. For most of the 18 months he was unemployed she supported the family on her wage of £40 per week: her husband only received '35p' in benefit. In an effort to get around this dilemma, her husband told the 'dole' that he had been 'kicked out of the house and that he was living with a relative.' This did not work because

the Department of Health and Social Security sent inspectors to watch her house. Eventually she gave up her job and returned to work only when her husband became a self-employed window cleaner⁽⁶⁾.

It would seem, therefore, that in the 1960s and the 1970s it was not especially common for female shirtmakers to be the main breadwinners in Derry families, but what about the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s? Most census reports do not tabulate the figures in such a way as to illuminate this question; for example, the report for 1961 is the only one from which it is possible to calculate the proportion of single to married women working in the shirt factories - and then only for those workers resident in Derry city. According to that report only 980 or 26% of the 3,709 women shirt workers resident in the city were married (1964: 79). McLaughlin carried out a social survey designed to try to assess the extent to which women workers - irrespective whether or not they were shirtmakers - were the main family breadwinners in Derry between 1926 and the present day. The full results of this study are not currently available (her thesis, published in 1987, has a five year embargo), but in a paper read at a conference of the ILHS in Derry in 1985 she concluded that there was little evidence to suggest that the female breadwinner was an especially common phenomena in Derry during this period.

In short, despite the many affirmations that female breadwinner was commonplace, and although the historical position of women shirtmakers in the family in Derry remains somewhat obscure, it is possible to state that the extent of role-reversal has been exaggerated. It would be foolish, therefore, to suggest any correlation between the comparatively high densities of trade union membership among female shirt workers and their putative independence within the family.

However, the fact that only one of my sample of female union activists was married provides a clue to a potentially significant insight: most trade union activists were single women. But my sample includes only four women, and only one became a union activist earlier than 1953; we are therefore left with two further questions: does this generalisation also apply in the 1920s and 1930s? and, are

my respondents representative of union activists in the 1940s and 1950s? An examination of the lists of committee members which were occasionally recorded in the minute book of the Derry Branch of the ASTT/NUTGW allow me to answer both questions in the affirmative. In 1924, there were 11 women on the Committee; only 3 were married (see Minute: 23 July 1924). There were 4 female members of the new Branch Committee formed after the amalgamation of the local Branches of the ASTT and UGW in 1933; none of them was married (see Minute: 10 October 1933). In 1948 12 women Committee members, plus two shop stewards who were the union's delegates to the Trades Council, were listed; only 2 were married (see Minute: 3 February 1948). In a list entitled 'Branch Committee 1950', there were 9 women; only 2 were married. And of the 13 women who were members of the NUTGW Branch Committee which was reconstituted after the majority of the membership seceded to another union, only 5 were married (see Minute: 17 November 1953).

As many scholars have noted, the domestic commitments which usually accrue to women when they marry makes it difficult for them to participate in union management. For example, Turner (1962: 294) points out that in the cotton industry, women union officers tend to be spinsters or older married women whose children had left home. The evidence which I have presented above suggests that - whatever is the truth about role-reversal in Derry families - married women shirtmakers were neither better able nor more inclined to actively participate in trade union affairs than married women workers elsewhere. Indeed, the lists of committee members discussed above may over-estimate the extent to which married women were active in the Derry Branch of the NUTGW: my respondents' recollections indicate that all of the most active women were single. Mrs Henderson is an exception which, to some extent, proves the rule. She did not find much difficulty in reconciling her commitment to the union with family life because she was childless. Most of her union activity took place,

while I was working [in the factory] and I was paid for that time I stopped working... I didn't do it for nothing, the union paid that.

I asked, 'but, what about union meetings in the evening?' She replied:

I had no family you see, and then my husband... he was a bread agent and he had long hours. He used to be in at 11 o'clock at night and I could have been at meetings and back again before ever he came in... and he never objected me going away for weekends... even to England or anything like that. He never objected... I enjoyed the work while I was doing it.

The one way in which her two careers - as a wife and as a trade union activist - clashed was that she had to refuse an invitation to attend a long-term residential course for trade union activists at Ruskin College: 'I would have gone if I'd been single.'

Regardless of the facts of family life in Derry, the idea of role-reversal as a commonplace embodies a recognition of the importance of shirtmakers' wages to their families and to the local economy in general. Judging from the literature (see especially Charles, 1983), this local recognition of the importance of women's jobs is unusual. In most places women's employment is regarded as marginal or, at least, of less importance than men's. Several examples may be cited to illustrate the value placed on women's jobs in Derry. One is a feature in the Derry Journal (14 March 1947). It comprised of a photograph of women workers in Richard's 'Paragon' factory entitled 'Derry's Mainstay Army'; the commentary reads:

Derry's 5,000 shirt workers hold tenaciously to the last vestige of the city's erstwhile industrial greatness... by their traditional skill... the city's factory workers have held for it, its premier place in the shirtmaking world.

Another example is a speech made by the Catholic Bishop of Derry, Dr Farren, during the Feast of Saint Joseph the Workman. The notion of a male family wage was enshrined in Catholic social thought (O'Dowd, 1987: 16); nevertheless, Dr Farren, specifically praised the contribution of married women shirt workers to the local economy and to their families (DJ: 3 May 1957). An example of a different kind was provided by a local historian '??' who told me that the American sailors who were stationed in Derry during the Second World War were warned that because of the local employment situation Derry's factory girls were of a 'better class' than elsewhere - the implication being that they should be treated with more respect. Against this background the evident concern of McGonagle and Macgougan for the

organisation of female shirt factory workers can be seen to be less of a paradox.

Prior to his appointment as Irish organiser of the NUTGW Macgougan worked as personal assistant to the 'principle of a firm of chartered accountants' in Belfast. He had been involved in left-wing politics in Belfast from an early age, and had been instrumental in the recruitment of accountancy clerks into the Clerical and Administrative Union (see Appendix 1). His boss had been appointed as 'Clothing and Equipment Conptroller for Northern Ireland' during the Second World War, and 'part of my duties was to go to the trade association, take the minutes, and do statistical work for them.' Consequently, he had some knowledge of the clothing industry in Northern Ireland, and he thought that this 'gave me an edge' when he applied for the NUTGW job. Initially, Macgougan was not concerned one way or another that the NUTGW was a mainly female union: 'that didn't worry me in the slightest'; his interest in the job was mainly political,

When the job was advertised for the the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union I was active politically... being in accountancy in a place like Belfast is not a good field for left-wing politics, particularly with a republican stance, particularly from a Protestant: you get labelled very quickly.

Soon after his appointment, however, Macgougan was struck by the importance of female employment in Derry's shirt factories. He still is: several times during our conversations he repeated the employment figures, '7,000 shirt workers, 35 factories [sic], and a population of only just over 40,000... under 50,000.' He was so impressed by the Derry situation that he wrote an article about it in 1948. This article is the earliest published discussion of the theme of role-reversal in Derry that I have come across; though Macgougan told me that even at that time it was a familiar enough idea. He begins the article thus:

This is the story of a one industry town, where almost 7,000 women find employment in the city's thirty shirt factories. This bald statement does not adequately convey the poverty and frustration occasioned by large families being brought up on the inadequate earnings of the women members of the family... The almost complete lack of male employment drives many to seek employment not only in Belfast, 90 miles away, but in all parts of Britain. Of those who remain some 'keep house' while their wives act as

breadwinners, and it is the exception, rather than the rule, for women to retire from work on marriage. (Macgougan 1948: 1).

Macgougan continued to display a concern for the problems arising from Derry's singular dependence on female labour. In 1948 when cloth was in short supply he approached the Minister of Commerce to argue that Derry firms should be given prior access to what was available because 'the whole city depends on the industry' (GW: August 1948). Twice, he drew attention to the unusually high incidence of tuberculosis among female factory workers in Derry arguing that it was the result of an excessive workload which he saw as a consequence of the sexual imbalance in local employment opportunities (GW: April 1950, and News Sheet of the Belfast Executive of the Irish Labour Party, February 1953). Finally, Macgougan, like other left-wing activists who were concerned about Derry, campaigned for the location of more male employing industry in the city; but, uniquely among these campaigners he was careful that the interests of female shirt workers should not be neglected:

the stress has rightly been on the need for male-employing industries, but it is a mistake to overlook the considerable underemployment among women workers.' (GW: February 1959).

Prior to his appointment as local organising secretary, McGonagle was a well respected and skilled plumber, a lay official in the plumbers' union, secretary of the Trades Council, and active in local labour politics. When I interviewed him, he emphasised that he gave up a good job to take up the NUTGW appointment. Like Macgougan, McGonagle displayed a keen awareness of the importance of women's jobs in the shirt industry, but he was ambivalent; to be more precise he was ill at ease with a situation which, apparently, contradicted the norms of a male family wage. For example, he described women factory workers as 'the source of all money that came into Derry... [the] shirt workers made the economy of Derry with their spending power,' but he was reluctant to describe the women as breadwinners because the term was 'derogatory to their husbands.' Moreover, in contrast to Macgougan, he seems to have been prepared to advocate an increase in the number of jobs for men even if it was associated with a decline in jobs for women in the shirt industry (see Liberty: November 1960). McGonagle denied that he thought that the

introduction of male employing industry might be associated with a decline in jobs for women in the shirt industry, but told me that four years after he became organising secretary of the NUTGW in Derry (ie in 1951/52) 'I concluded that the shirt industry was in a decline' (e).

Unlike the women trade unionists interviewed in Charles' (1983) survey, none of my respondents felt that Macgougan or McGonagle had neglected their interests as women workers. For example, Miss Gallagher did not feel that the emphasis placed by local union leaders, including Macgougan and McGonagle, on the attraction of male employing industries to Derry was indicative of neglect or a threat to shirt workers: 'work for men in Derry at that time was badly needed.' I asked Miss Cosgrave if she ever thought that union officials had neglected the interests of female shirtmakers; she replied:

90% of the women always felt the union didn't do enough for them. But as Stephen McGonagle used to preach... you have to be honest with the employer and honest with yourself and not ask for anything that wasn't legal or just. I wouldn't have been a trade union official for nobody, for money wouldn't have paid you to take the stick and take the abuse from the employer and the worker.

Although two of my female respondents felt that women should have been better represented in the union's hierarchy, the sex of union officials never became an issue in Derry. Miss Gallagher told me 'we... thought a woman could speak as well if not better for the woman on the job.' Mrs Henderson said:

I think they (women) would have understood the shirt industry better because its all right for them talking, but when you're working a place and you can see the things thats happening and you know whats happening. Like you had to go and explain to the men the things. They may have known something, but not the inner things that you had to use against the employer. I could've hit Lowry [general manager of McCarthy's factory] with anything that I seen wasn't right but if I'd said that to Jack Macgougan or to Willie [Neill, organising secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the late 1950s], or to any of them ones... you had to go into all the details whereas if you were on the spot you were able to [rectify it there and then].

Another Branch Committee member, quoted in section 4.2, voiced a similar criticism of McGonagle over the issue of work study:

'Bandstitchers knew more about the job than the secretary' (Minute: September 1948). To be sure, when Sarah Doherty retired there was some controversy within the Branch over the appointment of her replacement. However, the sex of the replacement was not at issue. Jack Doherty, a tailor who was a member of the Branch Committee, objected to the way in which the post of 'organising secretary' was to be filled. He argued that it should be filled by election within the Branch not by appointment because in the latter case Macgougan would have undue influence over the candidate selected. When McGonagle was appointed, Doherty and a cutter called Patrick Hamill objected to the fact that he was not a member of the NUTGW, resigned from the committee, and threatened to form a breakaway union. This episode is interesting in the light of subsequent events, and it will be examined further, but for the moment the most important point is that the sex of the new local official was not at issue. The nature of the controversy is further illuminated by the fact that Jack Doherty was one of the applicants for the job. (Minutes: July, September, and October 1947). In the early 1960s, Jack Macgougan appointed Francis Maguire, a former clothing worker from Belfast, as the NUTGW's women's officer for Northern Ireland.

In other studies, the marginalisation of women's interests within the trade unions is said to come about not just because male trade union officials view their female members in terms of family ideology - the notion that women's place is in the home and that their waged work is secondary to that of men - but because 'it also structure[s] the views and perceptions of... women [trade unionists]' (Charles, 1983: 19). The question therefore arises: what effect did the positive value placed on the work of women in the shirt industry have on the attitude of female union members towards their union? Was it this which encouraged them to become more actively involved union affairs than their sisters elsewhere? The evidence at hand is not adequate to answer these questions; it is however sufficient to show the complexity of the issues.

When I asked my respondents why they joined the union in the first place, and why they later became activists they each gave a different kind of answer. Miss Gallagher joined because she was

encouraged to do so by her brother and by a family tradition; she became active in the NUTGW because of her opposition to the 1952 breakaway. Miss McMorris joined because she was asked to join; she became an activist reluctantly and after much persuasion by her peers (see Appendix i). As I have already mentioned, Mrs Henderson's interest in trade unionism developed as a response to the introduction of work study and because of her hostility to the 1952 breakaway. I will examine each woman's attitude to trade unionism at length in later chapters; the main point for the moment is that of all my respondents, only Miss Cosgrave indicated that a recognition of the importance of women shirt workers' wages to their families was a part of her commitment to trade unionism⁹. She explained her union involvement in terms of a resentment of the arbitrary power of management both in small things like tea breaks and toilet facilities and larger issues such as the introduction of the conveyor system. In relation to the latter she said:

they [the women] just had to take it and bear with it and do their work and do the amount they had to because they had no alternative because most of the women... were married and their husbands weren't working and there was no such thing as social security there.

Moreover, there is evidence that, far from encouraging union activity on the part of women, the fact that their wages were considered as being vital to the city's economy was, on occasion, used to dampen their enthusiasm for action. For example, when it was announced that work study was going to be applied to production in the City factory, the Branch Committee - mindful of the refusal of some women workers in Harrison's factory to accept the new methods of production and payment introduced by the work study consultants and approved by McGonagle - warned that,

workers should not attempt to stop efficiency and progress with this the only industry in Derry, as the whole city depended on it... the new scheme must be given an honest trial... the industry was entering a competitive phase and the worker could make or destroy the whole business. If it suffered in a small degree then the effect would be widespread even among other trades. (Minute: 8 January 1949).

To sum up. The comparatively high density of union membership and participation among women shirtmakers in Derry cannot be explained in terms of their supposed position as family breadwinners:

the evidence suggests that the incidence of role-reversal between shirtmakers and their husbands has been much exaggerated, and, in any case, most female union activists were mature single women. However, the popularity of the idea of women-as-breadwinners seems to have contributed to the unionisation of shirtmakers in an indirect way. To judge from the literature (eg Charles 1983) male union officials usually regard women's work as being secondary to men's work, and consequently tend to neglect their female members' interests. In contrast, the two men appointed to organise Derry shirt workers after World War Two approached their job with a singular zeal. Their zeal can, in part, be traced to a heightened awareness of the importance of women's jobs in the shirt industry to local families and to the local economy more generally. But this does not, in itself, constitute an adequate explanation for the comparatively high densities of union membership among Derry shirtmakers. What, then, is the explanation? Macgougan suggested one possibility. I asked him why he thought trade union membership in Derry was proportionately greater than in Belfast. In reply, he told me that the factories in Derry were larger than in Belfast. This is indeed the case: Hamilton (1955: 27) has shown that, on average, shirt factories in Derry employed twice as many workers as shirt factories in Belfast. Furthermore, as Poole (1984: 136) has pointed out, the association between 'enterprise size and density of unionisation has... been well documented'. However, he adds that 'the precise factors involved are open to dispute', and for me to dwell on them here would be to divert me from my main purpose - a purpose to which I now want to return.

4.4 Trade Unionism and Sectarianism in the 1930s and 1940s

It has been shown that, contrary to what traditional Irish marxism would lead one to expect, fluctuations in union membership among women in the Derry shirt industry during the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s followed a similar pattern to that for the United Kingdom as a whole, and that union densities and the level of

active involvement by women in union affairs compared favourably with British standards. It has also been shown that the structural and institutional factors which underlay the fluctuating pattern of union membership among Derry shirtmakers were more or less the same as those which have been identified in Britain and elsewhere. In so far as the density of union membership among Derry shirtmakers in the late 1940s was exceptional, one of the main things which distinguished Derry seems to have been the zeal of the two male organisers appointed after 1945; this, in turn, was linked to the widespread recognition of the importance of women shirt workers in the social and economic fabric of the city. Having established these points, it is now possible to attempt to locate the significance of sectarianism in the development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the period.

When talking about the 1930s and 1940s, none of my respondents recalled any occasion when sectarian conflict interfered with trade unionism; sectarianism was a problem which they associated with the 1950s. Most of my respondents did not go so far as Mrs Henderson when she told me that 'no, things like that [politics, religion] never were mentioned in the factory till that happened [ie the secession of the Derry Branch Committee of the NUTGW in 1952]', but they would have agreed with the underlying idea. There was certainly no conflict on a comparable scale to 1883 or 1899 (see section 3.2); indeed, I found no trace of sectarian conflict involving shirt workers in the local press, union journal, or Branch Committee minutes. However, all my respondents were keenly aware of sectarian divisions within the shirt industry. They mentioned that relations between Catholic and Protestant shirt workers would become more tense on 12 July, when the Orange Order commemorates William of Orange's victory over James the II in 1690; on 12 August, when the Apprentice Boys commemorate the Relief of Derry by marching through the city; and on a few other occasions. One of latter was 'Poppy day.' Miss Gallagher, a Catholic with a pro-British outlook, noticed tensions in Harrison's factory when some of the 'Unionist girls' tried to sell poppies in November each year:

Poppy day would be a day, they [some Catholic women] wouldn't let you buy a poppy, some of them would buy, but as the years went on they just had to leave the poppies in a box. Because some of the girls would go round with a

box, some of them took them and some of them didn't. But you could see the expression on the others' faces - the people that didn't want you to buy one, that sort of thing. And I always used to say to them: 'my brothers and they've been in the army,' anything like that and 'you're supporting' - but then it got from Stephen's [McGonagle] time [ie after the split in the union] all these things were very noticeable;

she claimed that, 'he thrived on things like that at that time.' Today, the display of red, white, and blue bunting is fairly commonplace in many Belfast factories during the period of the 12 July celebrations; this was rare in Derry shirt factories, Seamus Quinn told me, 'I never saw it or heard of it.' The only occasion which I have come across was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II when the different departments of the following factories held a competition for decoration: S. M. Kennedy and Co., McCarthy and Co., W. J. Little and Co., Gilfillan and Co., and J. Hamilton and Sons (LS: 2 June 1953). The reader may recall that these factories were all associated with the Protestant community, and one ex-shirt worker who attended a lecture I gave claimed that the decorations had caused offence to the Catholic women who worked in these factories.

Most of my respondents attached greater significance to the religious segregation of the workforce than to actual conflict. According to Mr Matthews, a Protestant shirt cutter,

Not at all, no [sectarian] problems as regards [the] unions in the '30s because the average girl wasn't in a union at all, she just accepted her wage. But later on it [religious division] did become, it even came to fisticuffs in some of the factories between this girl 'Annie' and this girl 'Mary' [this is another reference to the secession of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in 1952]. One was in the Transport and General - Dublin based - Union and the other girl she was in the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union. Oh aye, it even came to physical blows and people being pressurised to get them out of the factory if there was a big majority of them in the one. McCarthy's would have been one of the few factories - and maybe Little's on the Waterside, especially McCarthy's - I think McCarthy's would have been nearly 100% Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] membership because they employed very few Roman Catholics. Although you weren't asked your religion when you went [for a job], but they had other ways [of telling]... No, I couldn't see it [ie religious differences obstructing union organisation in the 1930s] because it [the union] was so unimportant.

Mrs Gallagher told me that, notwithstanding tension at particular

times of the year, there was little sectarian conflict among factory workers in the 1930s and 1940s,

Not really, only just, you knew the way you were in Derry like the factory girls... there was no such thing as getting a day off on the twelfth [of July] then, no extra holidays. There never was, I wouldn't say there'd be tension unless there'd be something happen on the 12 July or the 12 August, and maybe they would bring it to the factory and the boss[es] they would have to say 'will you leave that outside when you come in here.' There might have been tension in that way but I wouldn't say there was a lot... But the way it used to go with the factories, like McCarthy's, like they were always considered that was the Protestant factory and you know like they would say, 'do you like working in McCarthy's,' you know that sort of way. Well Richard's and Harrison's and these [factories] that was on the town here, they [the workers] were all from the Bogside and Rosemount [ie mainly Catholic areas] and from all these places. That was sort of the way it was kept you know. Like the Ebrington, now the majority were Protestants in the Ebrington. And you know like they used to, you know like, that was the only sort of bit of tension you would have got like, but yet outside they would be friendly and all that. But that was they way we were... segregated.

Most of my respondents, Protestant and Catholic, identified McCarthy's and Ebrington as 'Protestant' factories, a few added smaller factories such as Hamilton's and Little's to the list. As I suggested in section 2.4, The ready identification of particular factories as 'Protestant' seems to reflect the fact that they were exceptions: the majority of the female shirt workforce was Catholic.

This analysis of the recollections of Derry shirt workers resonates with Munck and Rolston's analysis of the recollections of workers in Belfast's linen industry and shipbuilding complex during the same period; they write (1987: 111),

More common than an active sectarianism was this passive acceptance of religious divisions within the working class... sectarianism was not always present. Most workplaces probably did have amiable relations most of the year round. But the divisions were there and there was always a latent hostility. This would become more open around the twelfth of July.

Despite this - and the fact that their respondents tend to explain the weakness of trade unionism in Belfast's linen and clothing factories in terms of the lack of education of workers, the high turnover in the workforces, management opposition, women's dual role as housewives and wage labourers, the attitude of male trade

unionists to women, and the like (see 1987: 118-125) - Munck and Rolston remain wedded to the view that 'sectarianism was undoubtedly a factor weakening the trade unions' (1987: 117), and that 'the root of most sectarianism in the industrial world' was 'competition over jobs' (1987: 111). Here, Munck and Rolston reveal their own roots in traditional Irish marxism, for, as was shown in section 1.1, the central thesis of the traditional marxist analysis of the 'Northern Ireland problem' is that it is Protestant workers' privileged position in the labour market - maintained by discriminatory policies on the part of the Unionist bosses - which formed the material basis for sectarianism, and that it was sectarianism which prevented Protestant workers from uniting with their 'natural' allies - Catholic workers - in a progressive socialist movement.

I will discuss the effect of sectarian divisions among women shirt workers on the development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in a moment, but first I want to discuss my respondents' views on the origins of religious segregation within the shirt industry. It is important to be clear about what I am doing here. It is not part of my purpose in this thesis to attempt to account for sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. It is not even part of my purpose to account for the pattern of segregation between Catholics and Protestants in the Derry shirt industry. Rather, the reason for exploring my respondents' views on the origins of religious segregation in the shirt industry is to show that - contrary to what the traditional Irish marxist argument would lead one to expect - competition over, or discrimination in respect of, the allocation of jobs was rarely a cause of resentment between Catholic and Protestant shirt workers in Derry, let alone being the fundamental basis for sectarianism.

The reader may recall that in section 2.4 I drew attention not just to the tendency for some factories to be identified with the Protestant community but to another form of segregation whereby Protestants were over-represented in shirt cutting and in management. There was little doubt among my respondents - not only the Catholics, but some of the Protestants too - that the latter was the result of active discrimination on the part of shirt manufacturers and factory managers, most of whom were Protestants, in favour of their co-

religionists. Macgougan told me that,

A bigger proportion of the cutters were Protestant; it was widely believed that a Church of Ireland parish was a regular recruiting agent.

Matthews also felt that Catholics were discriminated against in the employment of cutters and management. He told me that the first Catholic to be employed as a cutter in Bryce and Weston's factory had been when he was the under manager of the cutting room there. He also told me that employers had no problem finding out the religion of a prospective employee and gave the example of one of his work mates who had been asked which school he had attended during an interview for a job in McCarthy's cutting room. McCorkell explained the Protestant domination of shirt cutting in the following terms:

You see there was an awful lot of grips and all the rest of it played a big part. At the time the masons met in a hall down Magazine street... and they were very strong. My father, he wasn't very happy that I hadn't joined one of these organisations - he was always telling me how I would progress in life by joining one of these [societies]... I was sorry about it because he was a decent old fella.

But he added:

Tell you a funny thing about the City factory... they also had what we called the white collar trade down the stairs... The manager there was a fella called O'Neill who was a very good Catholic, lived in Rosemount, yet all on that side it was a very good strong Catholic majority, [bandknifel] cutters and all, 'cause they cut their own stuff. And up in the shirts [ie shirt cutting room] it was Protestant right from top to bottom. I don't think it had much to do with the English, because they were connected with England - in fact they had a factory outside Paisley... I don't think that had a great deal to do with it. I think the main thing was, if there was a Catholic like that he was more or less, felt duty bound, to take a certain number [of Catholics], as many as he could, without offending the firm's policy. I don't think really they had a policy - it was the management. Just the same as they blame the management in the shipyard now for where the shipyard have gone to; you know: bad management.

The domination of management and shirt cutting by Protestant men, and the suspicions of discrimination which went along with it, were, as will become apparent, a source of some resentment among the Catholic shirt workers I interviewed⁽¹⁰⁾. However, the segregation of the female workforce between different factories was viewed somewhat differently by my respondents and by Catholics and Protestants in Derry generally. To be sure, there was some suspicion

that small factories such as Hamilton's and Kennedy's had discriminatory employment policies, but they were not considered important and it was felt that factory owners, most of whom were Protestants, could not, in general, sustain discriminatory policies with respect to the employment of women shirtmakers. Seamus Quinn told me:

Hamilton was [a Unionist Councillor], and Kennedy was until he died. They were of very little importance... they had their political views alright and they applied their policies in employment policies, but they didn't carry much weight... [as regards the other shirt manufacturers] you got to remember in Derry there was a big inhibition on even the most bigoted of them [shirt manufacturers] because if they were going to do that policy [discriminate against Catholics] - they did it with regard to the male employment - but with female employment they couldn't... because they needed them. [Employment policies were] not an issue, but it was well known. I think it was just sort of accepted by people: 'I wouldn't go to Hamilton's because they wouldn't employ you.'

Quinn suspected that McCarthy's management also had an employment policy which favoured Protestants, women as well as men, but told me that they had had to abandon it when the industrial consultants employed to introduce work study discovered that some department managers were finding it difficult to recruit sufficient female labour. Quinn, like Macgougan and Matthews, regarded the Protestant identity of the Ebrington, and the two or three other Waterside plants, to be an accident of geography: the Waterside is an overwhelmingly Protestant area ' '. Far from being a source of resentment, the employment provided by the shirt industry was regarded by Derry Catholics as, in the words of Frank Curran, former editor of the Derry Journal, (1986: 4),

heaven sent, for it was greedy for workers and provided employment for thousands of women whose husbands could not find work. The entrepreneurs who created the world-renowned industry did not care whether their profits accrued from the nimbleness of Catholic or Protestant fingers.

However, there is also the question of whether Protestant shirt workers resented the fact that Catholics predominated in the shirt workforce as a whole and in the workforces of most factories. Some evidence might suggest that they did. As I have already shown, McCorkell drew attention to a particular Catholic manager in the City

factory who favoured his co-religionists. A manager in Harrison's '12', a mainly Catholic factory, told me that 'sometimes Protestants felt hard done by.' And, Miss Cosgrave talked bitterly of an occasion when, shortly after having been made a manageress in the Rosemount factory in the early 1960s, she became the target of anonymous allegations that she had treated the small number of Protestants who worked in the factory in a discriminatory way (see Appendix 1). However, none of the Protestant shirt workers I spoke to felt that they had been discriminated against in the allocation of jobs, or expressed any resentment about the number of Catholics employed in the shirt industry. Moreover, although the Democratic Unionist Party recently mounted a vigorous campaign to highlight what they saw as discrimination against Protestants in 25 of the city's largest employers, only one of these was a shirt factory - the one factory located in a strongly nationalist residential area - and they made it clear,

that we were not so much concerned about the long established firms of which there are many in Londonderry [this could only be a reference to the shirt industry]... they draw employees from different religions and ethnic groups and they also recruit workers who have family connections with staff... these family links often stretch back 60, 70, and up to 100 years... what the Protestant community is most concerned about is the recruitment practice in firms which have been started up in the area in the past 10 to 15 years. (LS: 3 February 1982; see also: Democratic Unionist Party, 3 October 1978; FEA, September 1983; and Dempsey 1983).

Despite the lack of political controversy in the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the 1930s and 1940s, and the fact that workplace relations between Protestants and Catholics were trouble-free, Sarah Doherty was not successful in recruiting members across the sectarian divide: according to Miss Gallagher, and Mrs Henderson the activists and lay membership were mainly Catholics. Jack Macgougan's impression of the Branch on his appointment as Irish regional organiser in 1945 was that,

It was almost exclusively a Catholic Branch at that time... Among the tailors there'd be some Protestants, but they didn't take any part in the [Branch], one, Wright his name was, was a Protestant Tailor, he became Branch president [for a short time].

I sought to corroborate these recollections by asking my respondents

to tell me the religious affiliations of each of the Committee members listed in the minutes of the Derry Branch of the ASTT/NUTGW. They were not able to provide me with a religious label for each and every member of the various Branch Committees between 1933 and 1945, but I am able to say that the core of female activists in these years - Miss Doherty, Miss Moore, Miss Nellis, Miss Kelly, and Miss McCourt - were Catholics. Miss Moore worked in Tillie and Henderson's factory and this was the factory which retained the biggest membership during the difficult years of the 1930s and early 1940s: Percy Burns reported receiving a particularly warm reception from Tillie and Henderson shop stewards when he visited Derry in 1937 (GW: November 1937); Waldron referred to it as a factory 'in which we already have some hundreds of members' (GW: May 1940); and Macgougan remembers it as one of the few factories in which he found any union members when he first visited Derry in 1945. Notwithstanding Miss Gallagher's remarks about poor organisation in Richard's factory in the 1930s and 1940s, it was clearly better organised than most: Miss Nellis, Miss Kelly, and Miss McCourt all worked there. This is not to say that there were no Protestant shirt workers in the NUTGW in the 1930s and early 1940s; there was: the minutes of the 1937 'Yearly Meeting' of the Branch mentions that the union had a shop steward in the Ebrington factory (there was no subsequent reference to her), and it is likely that the Branch Chairman between 1933 and 1939, a cutter called John Kilgore, was a Protestant (13). However, it is clear that they were relatively few. I will consider the reasons why so few Protestants joined the Branch in the 1930s and early 1940s in a moment, but first I want to examine what, if any, problems Macgougan and McGonagle had in dealing with sectarian differences among their constituency and whether the organising campaigns which they initiated in the late 1940s resulted in any change in the religious imbalance in NUTGW membership.

Despite some suspicion, Macgougan - a 'nationally minded socialist' from a Belfast Protestant background - got a good reception from the Derry Branch:

Sarah Doherty thought, of course, I was a communist, but she treated me with due respect: I was the senior officer. She indicated early on that she wanted to be relieved of her post - she'd cancer.

There was, as has already been shown, some opposition within the Branch Committee to the appointment of Stephen McGonagle as Miss Doherty's replacement. I have already pointed out that this opposition was orchestrated by a tailor who was one of McGonagle's rivals for the job, and that his main complaints were that McGonagle was not a garment worker and that he was being appointed by Macgougan rather than being elected by the local Branch. However, Macgougan told me that although McGonagle was a local Catholic there was also 'an element that suspected the political alignment... old fashioned nationalists.' The suspicion of some members of the Branch that Macgougan favoured McGonagle's appointment because the two men shared a common political outlook was, as shall be detailed in chapter six, not too far from the truth: both men were anti-partitionist members of the NILP in 1947.

Macgougan and McGonagle sought to recruit union members in all of Derry's factories irrespective of the religious composition of their workforces. Neither man hid his political views - both were active politicians - but they were both sensitive to sectarian sensibilities. Nevertheless, as Macgougan conceded, they both found it more difficult to recruit in those factories which have been described as 'Protestant.' Macgougan told me:

The first factory I organised was Harrison's. I got a marvellous shop steward there... she organised. I always aimed at addressing a meeting - trying to get, sum up, somebody and then [encourage them to become a shop steward]... Bridie Maxwell [was the shop steward in Harrison's]... Ebrington was a slow starter: it was a Protestant factory... got to be blunt about it, part of the facts of life. There was Hamilton's, Ebrington, and a small one called Little[s]. Hamilton's was on this side of the river; the others on the Waterside. Well then you had the Rosemount factory out on the other extreme.

However,

generally speaking we got over to them [Protestant workers] the fact that we were piggy in the middle and that it didn't matter to us where they went on a Sunday... McCarthy's was the outstanding example [of a factory with a Protestant workforce], it later became the cornerstone of our organisation in Derry.

Macgougan's statement requires two qualifications. First, it is true that McCarthy's factory became the 'cornerstone' of NUTGW organisation in Derry, but not until the late 1950s. In 1947/48 when

Mrs Henderson began working there,

there was only a few [trade union members]... just a handful, like out of 3 or 400 girls I would say maybe 100, 150 then; if there was that even.

Second, it is clear that workers in the Ebrington did not respond to either Macgougan's or McGonagle's efforts in the late 1940s: the minutes of a Branch Committee meeting (19 April 1950) report:

The secretary read a membership analysis of factories in which we had lapsed members, factories where organising was making good progress, and factories where we had no membership at all. He pointed out that in this last category the [Amalgamated] Transport and General Workers' Union had some 50 to 60 garment workers in Ebrington Factory.

Thus, although a significant number of Protestant women joined the NUTGW in response to Macgougan's and McGonagle's recruitment campaigns, they were, apparently, less enthusiastic than Catholics. This is confirmed by an analysis of the composition of the Branch Committee elected to serve in 1950. My respondents were able to tell me that 11 out of 14 were Catholics; I have been unable to discover the religious affiliation of the remaining three. Mr Wright, the Protestant tailor mentioned by Macgougan, had resigned as president of the Branch in 1947 because of ill health; he was replaced by a Catholic cutter called Patrick Hamill. Hamill sided with Jack Doherty in the controversy over McGonagle's appointment, and, having been implicated in the plan to form a breakaway union, he resigned in October 1947. Hamill was replaced by a tailor called McCrystal who was in turn replaced, in May 1948, by Lawrence Hegarty, a Catholic cutter from Tillie and Henderson's.

The questions that arise from the foregoing analysis are: why were so few Protestants involved in the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the 1930s and 1940s? and why was their response to the recruitment drives of the late 1940s less enthusiastic than Catholic shirtmakers? Given the perspective and research techniques adopted in this study, these kinds of questions are difficult to answer: my respondents were chosen precisely because they did join, and become active in, the NUTGW. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile considering their answers to these questions. Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher, the two women in my sample who were members of the NUTGW in the 1930s and 1940s,

thought that Protestant shirt workers were, in general, less inclined to trade unionism than Catholics because they received favourable treatment from shirt factory managers with whom they usually shared a common religious identity. Miss Cosgrave told me:

I'll tell you this much now, and I don't care if you are recording it or not. I'm not a bit ashamed, now I don't want to hurt your feelings, [but] if you were a Protestant and no matter what mistake you made - that was overlooked. Now I'm being honest and truthful... anything... anywhere in the factory, if you made a mistake, no matter how big it was, that was overlooked. But if you were a Catholic you were put out on your mouth and nose in the street if you made a mistake. And they had Protestants in high up jobs and hadn't a brain in their head. And I'll tell you that much, making more mistakes than enough that the people on the ground then... rectified when it came to our department... They [Protestant workers] hadn't a call for a trade union you see. The firm was their trade union, they were their stand by.

Miss Gallagher, told me, 'you see the Protestants would think that they were well enough and didn't have to join a union.'

Several writers have attempted to generalise in a similar way about other groups of Protestant workers in Northern Ireland. According to Messenger (1981: 207) one 'factor' which 'worked against unions achieving a strong position' in the Belfast linen industry was,

religious sectarianism which worked both to overshadow common grievances among segments of the working population and to make it difficult for Protestant workers to overcome religious convictions and join with Catholics in action against mainly Protestant management.

She continues (1981: 210):

The negative effects of religious sectarianism upon efforts to unionize those [workers] in the linen industry have been recognised by many students of the topic, and a majority of the workers themselves were well aware of the problem. 'The trouble in Ireland is water. There's Holy water and there's Boyne water. The two don't mix'. Many also agreed that Catholics were more inclined than Protestants to consider unions as allies in their attempts to better their lot.

However, the only evidence which Messenger adduces to support these contentions is a song about a Protestant women who failed to join her fellow workers in a strike and who was given 'jam and baps' for lunch by management (see 1978: 210). Munck and Rolston note (1987: 122) that,

A few people pointed towards a certain difference between Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards trade unions... Lucy McErlaine, who worked in Gallaher's [cigarette factory], thought that Protestants were hostile to trade unions whereas Catholics supported them.

'But,' they add, 'we were unable to confirm this.' It seems to me that while generalisations of this kind may tell us something about the attitudes of the people who make them, they tell us little about trade unionism among Protestant workers, whether in the case of Belfast linen workers or of Derry shirtmakers.

There may be an element of truth in the suggestion that the attitude of some Protestant shirt workers towards trade unionism was coloured by their relationship with managers, most of whom were, as has been shown, also Protestants. For example, as the reader may recall, John McCorkell explained the failure of some Protestant shirt cutters to join the UGW and support the 1920 strike in terms of their common identity with managers as members of the Orange Order, the masons, or the B Specials. However, it should not be forgotten that many more Protestant shirt cutters were members of the UGW and supported the strike. Likewise, although the Derry Branch of the NUTGW was almost exclusively Catholic in the 1930s and early 1940s, it should not be forgotten that many Protestant shirtmakers responded to Macgougan's and McGonagle's recruitment campaigns in the late 1940s, and that, as Macgougan indicated, McCarthy's factory was to become the 'cornerstone' of NUTGW organisation in the city. It is not possible to understand why so few Protestants were members of the NUTGW in the 1930s, or why Catholics responded more enthusiastically than Protestants to the organising campaigns of the late 1940s, in terms of a general hostility to trade unionism inherent in the condition of Protestant workers in Northern Ireland. Rather, both of these phenomena must be understood as an historical process constructed through the practices of actual individuals operating in a particular social milieu.

The key to understanding both phenomena seems to lie in what has already been established about NUTGW organisation in the 1930s and 1940s - its general underdevelopment. Prior to Macgougan's appointment as regional organiser, the Derry Branch of the NUTGW had languished. Sarah Doherty - only a part-time organising secretary -

was content to maintain and service the membership that she had; she did not aspire to expansion. When Macgougan arrived in Derry in 1945 the Branch was only

a little clique around Sarah Doherty, she was a very nice old woman, but only a bookkeeper, she didn't do any organising.

Macgougan found 'it hard to say' why the Branch was 'almost exclusively Catholic,' but,

first of all, Sarah Doherty was a very devout Catholic, very nice woman, but very very narrow - very limited - in her outlook, and she used to have a few cronies around her.

In other words, in so far as Sarah Doherty did any organising, she did it through her own personal network. Certainly, the main NUTGW activists in the 1930s, and 1940s - Miss Moore, Miss Kelly, and Miss Nellis - were, by all accounts, close personal friends of Miss Doherty's. Miss McMorris's recollection of how she first came to join the NUTGW in Harrison's factory, provides further evidence of the extent to which Miss Doherty relied on her personal network for Branch organisation:

It was in the period... [when I was] folding [shirts] and it was a woman who lives in Buncrana now, it was her aunt called Sarah Doherty, her niece worked with me. All I knew about the union was as vague as a fly to the moon. Well, now I did, I went with my father's [union dues] to the carpenters' [union in] Foyle Street... he sent all his wee girls with the union [dues], his card, but... that's all I knew about the union... I didn't know her [Sarah Doherty], it was her niece that took something like six pence or something [in union dues]. I just paid it 'cause everybody was doing [so], see at that age you just did what everybody else did. They looked at you funny if you didn't.

To the extent that Sarah Doherty relied on informal personal relationships for recruitment and the maintenance of union membership, it is not surprising that the Derry Branch of the NUTGW was mainly Catholic: informal social networks in Northern Ireland tend to operate within one or other of the two main religious/political communities. Certainly, Miss Moore, Miss Kelly, and Miss Nellis - Miss Doherty's personal friends and the leading NUTGW activists in the 1930s and 1940s - were Catholics. Social networks within the Derry shirt industry were further circumscribed by the religious segregation of the workforce between factories. In this context, it is no great surprise that Macgougan and McGonagle

were, initially atleast, more successful at recruiting Catholic women than Protestants. As I have shown, in factories like Tillie and Henderson's, Harrison's, and Richard's there already existed a network, nowever rudimentary, of shop stewards and collectors of union subscriptions. The workforces of all these factories were predominantly Catholic. In factories which employed mainly Protestant workers - McCarthy's, Ebrington, Hamilton's, and Little's - there was no such network; it had to be built up from scratch, as it were.

Harris (1972: 138-139) has identified similar processes with respect to the membership of voluntary organisations such as the Young Farmers' Club and the Farmer's Union in Ballybeg. Here the situation was the reverse of that in Derry: membership of the Ballybeg organisations was mainly Protestant. Harris writes that all the groups had been founded by Protestants and that their core memberships were drawn from among the founders' relatives and closest contacts, most of whom were also Protestants. She adds that Catholics would have been put-off joining the groups because they would have felt 'socially uneasy' and 'out of place'. Her conclusion is that:

without any wish to turn these organisations into Protestant movements, the normal pattern of making contacts with others through the pre-existing network of relationships inevitably led to the development of just this kind of situation.

In the Derry case the pattern was broken by Macgougan and McGonagle who successfully recruited Protestants as well as Catholics into the NUTGW. However, as we have seen, breaking the pattern was not an easy matter: Protestants were, initially, less responsive than Catholics to the recruitment drives. As I suggested above, this difference can partly be explained by the fact that in factories with a mainly Catholic workforce - Tillie and Henderson's, Harrison's, Richard's, etc. - there already was a network, however rudimentary, of shop stewards and collectors of union subscriptions which undoubtedly made Macgougan's and McGonagle's task easier than in 'Protestant' factories where no such network existed. But, like Harris, we must also consider the possibility that Protestant shirt workers were discouraged from joining and becoming active in the NUTGW because they felt uneasy about its predominantly Catholic

membership; particularly since Macgougan and McGonagle were both prominent in anti-partitionist politics.

Miss Gallagher thought that Protestant shirtmakers may have felt, or been made to feel, uneasy about joining the NUTGW:

You see Sarah Doherty being a Catholic they were all prejudiced too, you had that running along certain elements in the factory... But it was all in the area, like you had Tillie's too, and it was very Catholic... it was all laid out, you knew exactly what the feeling was in all those factories. But like people on this side, around the Catholic areas... they let you know what they were.

And Macgougan told me that the slower response of Protestant workers to his recruitment campaigns 'was a question of who got there first... [if] the Catholics got in the Protestants stayed out and vice versa.' Moreover, there was clearly some suspicion of the NUTGW in Unionist circles in Derry. In 1948, for example, the Reverend MacManaway the Unionist MP (Stormont) for Derry City asked the Minister of Labour to look into two allegations of discrimination against Protestants in Derry. One was in the docks; the other was in the appointment of ex-service men to a training scheme for tailors. MacManaway asked if it was true that all 12 of those selected had been Catholics, and if selection had been entrusted to the NUTGW. The Minister of Labour replied that the 12 had been appointed after being interviewed by union, employer, and government representatives; that all eligible candidates had been considered; and that the most suitable candidates had been selected (DJ: 16 June 1948).

A superficial examination of Mrs Henderson's experience would tend to support the view that Protestant shirt workers were wary about joining the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. She was aware that its membership was mainly Catholic in the 1930s and early 1940s, and was ambivalent about when she first joined the union. In my preliminary interview with her she told me that, 'I wouldn't have went into Stevie's [McGonagle's] union; he'd broke away when I went into it [ie the NUTGW] you know.' However, in subsequent interviews it became clear that she, like many other Protestant workers, had joined the NUTGW in 1949 or 1950; that is, soon after she started working in McCarthy's factory, and while McGonagle was still the local official. Mrs Henderson's ambivalence about when she first joined the NUTGW is

linked to her dislike of McGonagle which in turn stems from his role in the introduction of work study, and in the establishment of the breakaway union in 1952. As I will show in chapter six, she particularly resented what she saw as McGonagle's attempts to undermine Macgougan and his nationalist machinations, but she makes clear that she had no suspicions of McGonagle when she first joined the NUTGW:

Stephen McGonagle was one of these men, I don't know how to explain him. He wanted to outshine Jack Macgougan an awful lot, he tried to really do Jack an awful lot of harm, although I didn't know Jack Macgougan then... but I understood it later on - when I got to know Jack - what this was all about.

Moreover, her answers to my questions about why she did not join the NUTGW prior to starting work in McCarthy's tend to support my argument that the comparatively low levels of union membership among Protestant shirt workers in the 1930s and 1940s was a consequence of the general underdevelopment of the Branch. She started her first job in 1938 in Little's factory; she did not join the union because 'there was no union then.' In 1942 Little's workers were put on 'short-time', and the labour exchange sent Mrs Henderson to work in Tillie and Henderson's. The latter was, as has been shown above, a mainly Catholic factory in which there was some organisation, but so far as Mrs Henderson was concerned,

Unions were not in the fore front then... if it was [ie if the union was in Tillie and Henderson's] it was unheard of. It might have been a few, but I didn't hear of any nor never asked to join... The union was not ripe in Derry in the shirt industry until work study came into it. It wasn't what you call a union minded city at all until work study came in, and thats what made most of the people go into it.

Mrs Henderson left Tillies' when she married in 1945; she started working in McCarthy's factory in 1947 or 1948.

4.5 Conclusion

The development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s stands in contrast to the usual view of trade unionism in Northern Ireland as having been thwarted by

sectarianism. Fluctuations in Branch membership followed the United Kingdom pattern; densities of union membership and levels of involvement in union activity among women shirtmakers in Derry compared favourably with those among British clothing workers. Perhaps the most obvious difference between women shirtmakers in Derry and women workers elsewhere in the United Kingdom was that in Derry the importance of women's wages to local families and to the local economy was widely recognised, and this may help to explain the zeal with which the two male union organisers appointed in the late 1940s went about their work. But, as I have shown, the main structural and institutional factors affecting the development of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in this period - labour market conditions, the effectiveness of internal union organisation, relations with management, the exigencies of women's position in the family - were similar to those which have been identified as affecting union development among women workers in general.

Nevertheless, religious and political divisions clearly had some influence on the development of the NUTGW in Derry: in the 1930s and early 1940s Branch membership was almost exclusively Catholic. It would appear that there was a tendency for - to paraphrase Rolston (1980: 71) - sectarian or communal divisions to be 'reconstituted' within the Branch. However, it is by no means clear that this process occurred in the way that traditional Irish marxists and others would have us believe. It was not the result of sectarian conflict because, as I have shown, relations between Catholic and Protestant women were comparatively pacific during this period, and discrimination in the allocation of jobs was not a divisive issue so far as women workers were concerned. It was not a consequence of a general hostility to trade unionism, as such, inherent in the condition of Protestant workers, nor of Protestant reluctance to join a mainly Catholic body: many Protestant shirtmakers responded - all be it less readily than Catholics - to the recruitment campaigns of the late 1940s. The changing religious composition of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the 1930s and 1940s cannot be understood in terms of generalisation such as these; it can only be understood as part of an historical process constructed by concrete individuals acting in a particular social milieu.

As we have seen, the shirt workers were partially segregated by religion such that while the workforces of most factories were mainly Catholic, three or four factories employed mainly Protestants. The secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW until 1947 was a woman who, for various reasons to do with her employment status and her health, was not energetic in the pursuit of new members; union membership and activity were generally at a low level. Union organisation, such as it was, was conducted through the Branch secretary's network of personal friends and relations who worked in the shirt industry. The Branch secretary was a Catholic, and as is often the case in Northern Ireland, her friends and relatives were also Catholic. Given the tendency for Catholics and Protestants to be segregated between factories, it was inevitable that - under this regime - sectarian divisions were 'reconstituted' within the union Branch. In contrast, when the new union officials, appointed in 1945 and 1947, embarked on recruitment campaigns they did so on a professional basis, sought members in all of Derry's factories, and quite quickly enrolled many workers - Protestant as well as Catholic - as members of the NUTGW. To be sure, organisation was, initially, more difficult in 'Protestant' factories than it was in factories with mainly Catholic workforces. This difference was a consequence of the fact that in many of the latter there already existed a rudimentary network of shop stewards whereas in the former union organisation had to be built up from scratch.

CHAPTER 5: MALE SHIRT CUTTERS AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NUTGW AND THE ATGWU 1920-1952: THE POLITICS OF SEX, SKILL, AND RELIGION

5.1 Introduction

More than 90% of the workforce in the Derry shirt industry was female. The only significant concentration of male workers was in the trade of shirt cutting. Most of the women were Catholics, and most of the tradesmen were Protestants. Judging from the material presented in chapters three and four, it would seem that the shirt cutters did not care to associate with the women shirtmakers. Until 1919, the shirt cutters formed unions whose names indicate that they catered only for practitioners of their trade. In 1919 the Shirt and Collar Cutters' Union of Ireland amalgamated with the UGW, a British union which organised clothing workers irrespective of their sex or skill. However, when local women started to join the UGW en masse in the aftermath of the 1920 strike, Derry shirt cutters began to defect to the ATGWU. This process continued throughout the 1920s, and very few shirt cutters remained, or became, members of the NUTGW in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

Irish marxist writers, of both the traditional and the revisionist varieties, characterise the attitude of the pioneers of trade unionism in Belfast towards women linen workers as having been one of indifference or contempt. The evidence relating to the attitudes of Belfast trade unionists at the turn of the century is sparse, but the writers speculate about whether the supposed indifference and contempt had its roots in 'sexism', sectionalism, or sectarianism: most of the trade unionists were Protestant tradesmen, and most of the linen workers were Catholic women (see Rolston, 1980: 72; Munck, 1986: 86-87; Patterson, 1980: 31; and Patterson, 1984: 174). The evidence relating to the organisational division between male shirt cutters and female shirtmakers in Derry in the pre-1920 period is equally sparse, but, unlike the writers mentioned above, I

refused to speculate. Newspaper reports and recollections of the 1920 strike provide some insight into the nature of relations between men and women in the Derry shirt industry. For example, John McCorkell suggested that the behaviour of shirt cutters during and after the strike was coloured by sexual and political considerations. He told me that the Catholic and Protestant shirt cutters who defected from the UGW to the ATGWU were not keen to belong to what was becoming a mainly female union Branch, and were anxious about the introduction of increasing numbers of women to the cutting rooms of Derry factories. He also felt that some Protestant members of the UGW did not defect to the ATGWU because they regarded the ATGWU's Derry membership as being too militant and too closely identified with nationalism. McCorkell's recollections are intriguing, but they are not in themselves a sufficient basis from which to draw conclusions.

The available sources of information on trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, are better and more varied than for the earlier periods, and in this chapter I will use them to construct a more systematic analysis of the nature of the division between male and female shirt workers. I spoke to four shirt cutters who served their apprenticeships in the 1930s and 1940s. One of these men has already been introduced: Mr Matthews, a Protestant who started his apprenticeship in Bryce and Weston's factory in 1926, became a pattern cutter and under manager, and then, after Bryce and Weston's closed in the late 1940s, worked in a variety of small shirt factories. Of the other three I have included only one, Mr Gordon, among my sample of respondents. Mr Gordon is a Protestant who became an apprentice shirt cutter in Hamilton's factory in 1930; he worked as a bandknife man there until 1962 when he moved to Little's factory; he left Little's in 1973 to become a night watchman for the Housing Executive, the body responsible for public housing in Northern Ireland. I have not included the other two men among my sample of respondents because I was unable to complete a full schedule of questions with them: both were still in employment and neither had the time or the inclination to be interviewed at length; I will, nevertheless, make use of some of their recollections ' '. Mr Nelson is a Protestant shirt cutter who

began his apprenticeship in McIntyre, Hogg and Marsh's factory in the 1930s; when I spoke to him he was still working in a small factory on the Waterside. Mr McDonald is a Catholic; he started his apprenticeship in Mooney's factory in the 1940s and is now a factory manager. I will, of course, draw on the recollections of other respondents in my sample, particularly those of George Hamill the ATGWU official responsible for the shirt industry between 1950 and 1976. There are also a number of documentary sources relating to the period. Apart from union journals and the minutes of the Londonderry Branch of the NUTGW, the most important of these are the minutes of the Cutters' Committee of the Londonderry Branch of the ATGWU 1950-52⁽²⁾.

In section 5.2 of this chapter I will examine the reasons given by shirt cutters to explain their membership of the ATGWU and set them against the background of the history of relations between the ATGWU and NUTGW. One of my main concerns will be to trace what, if any, role religious or political differences played in the organisational differentiation of male and female shirt workers. Having demonstrated that the ATGWU/NUTGW division cannot be characterised as a sectarian one, I will turn my attention to the question of gender. Those writers who have suggested that divisions in the early Belfast labour movement were rooted in 'sexism' do not explain why they think sex may have been important. However, relations between male and female trade unionists have been the subject of considerable debate among British scholars. According to the main theory to emerge from this debate, tensions between male and female workers resulted from the way in which the latter were introduced to the workforce. In the section 5.3 I will discuss a particular application of this theory to the British clothing industry and use it to illuminate the sexual division of labour in the Derry shirt industry. I will then, in section 5.4, explore the extent to which the ATGWU/NUTGW division can be explained in terms of the tensions arising in the development of the sexual division of labour in the Derry shirt industry.

5.2 The ATGWU and the NUTGW: a Sectarian Division?

Mr Matthews, Mr Gordon, and Mr Nelson each joined the ATGWU during their apprenticeship. It was a routine matter: the journeymen under whose supervision they worked were members of the ATGWU and asked them to join. So far as Mr Nelson was concerned the ATGWU was simply 'the union for cutters.' This situation was formalised when, in June 1932, the ATGWU and NUTGW signed a national agreement. According to the agreement the ATGWU recognised the 'right' of the NUTGW 'to organise the various grades of workers in the tailoring and garment trades', and the NUTGW agreed to 'render all possible assistance' to the ATGWU 'in their efforts to organise dispatch men and transport workers employed in connection with the tailoring and garment industry'; Derry shirt cutters, however, were exempted and permitted to remain members of the ATGWU. This exemption was not specified in the copy of the agreement which I have seen (Conley, 'Circular to All Full-Time Officials...', 24 June 1932), but its existence is indisputable: as will be shown its precise meaning later became a matter of heated dispute. Only a few shirt cutters, men like John Kilgore - chairman of the NUTGW throughout the 1930s - remained members of the NUTGW; even Willie Rolston, whom McCorkell remembers as a UGW stalwart, joined the ATGWU - he was a member of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU in 1950. By 1932, the ATGWU was indeed 'the union for cutters', whether they were Catholics or Protestants.

Nevertheless, the fact that most shirt cutters in Derry were members of the ATGWU was regarded - by the shirt cutters, by their union official, and by NUTGW officials - as being somewhat anomalous. The anomaly was explained to me as part of a motif which linked the the failure of the 1920 strike, the weakness of the UGW/NUTGW, the strength of the ATGWU, and the dockers' power to embargo shirt factories. Mr Matthews told me that the shirt cutters' membership of the ATGWU,

always puzzled me... I'll tell you, I think it was just a group of cutters originally who actually decided themselves that after the big strike around about 1923 - you see they made nothing of it at all, and most of these men were in the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union], the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] was never a strong union you understand - and, of course, after that I think a lot of

the men in the trade they said, 'why not approach the Transport and General Workers' [Union] because in the event of a strike at least we can put the lever on the employer in the sense, the docks.' The cutters reckoned if they had a strike the dockers would come out in sympathy with them which means the stuff wouldn't be coming in... or going out of the docks and I would say that was one of the explanations for it. The Tailor and Garment Workers' was never a strong union.

Mr Matthews, Mr Nelson, and Mr Gordon had no personal experience of the 1920 strike; Mr Matthews and Mr Nelson had been told about it by their older work mates, and Mr Gordon had been told about it by his mother. Mr Nelson and Mr Gordon echoed Mr Matthews' views about the Dockers' embargo and the weakness of the NUTGW. Even George Hamill gave me a garbled version of the story which contained the same elements as my other respondents:

The cutters were in the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union, that was their close affinity in an organisational pretext [sic]. At one time in the '30s there was a big row in one of the factories here and some of the cutters went on strike [there was no 'big' strike in the 1930s, this can only be a reference to the 1920 strike] and they seem to be getting nowhere - now I think that was in McCarthy's or Harrison's - but they seemed to be getting nowhere with the help they were getting from the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union because the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union hadn't the same muscle as we had, so they had to come and get help from the Transport Union, especially the dockers. All the stuff that was going out of Derry at that time was going across the water and sea transport. After the strike was settled-up the Transport Union by the fact that they did put an embargo on the stuff that was coming from this factory at the docks sort of brought the thing to a head [with] the result that alot of the cutters got together and says, 'we're in the wrong union, need a union with a wee bit of muscle and a wee bit of backing.'... So alot of them transferred over to our union.

Thus, there would appear to be little mystery about why the ATGWU became 'the union for cutters' in Derry in the late 1920s and early 1930s: it is, as we have seen, true that the dockers had embargoed strike-bound factories in 1920 and that the NUTGW was very weak in the 1930s. Indeed, Mr Gordon told me

I don't believe there was any Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] then, never heard about them in Derry to later years, don't forget I'm talking about when I was 18, 1934. That [the ATGWU] was the only union we knew about, they took in a Branch for the cutting you see. They were really a transport union but they took in a Branch, the Cutting Branch.

But, how had the ATGWU come to be 'the union for cutters'? Afterall, when John McCorkell left Derry c1927, shirt cutters seem to have been evenly divided between the UGW and the ATGWU. None of my respondents could speak out of personal experience on this question, but they provided clues to an explanation. They suggest that the failure of the strike demoralised shirt cutters and gave rise to a disillusionment with the UGW upon which the ATGWU was able to capitalise. Mr McCorkell's comments on the cutters' disillusionment with the UGW have already been discussed; their perspicacity is confirmed by Mr Matthews who told me:

It [trade unionism] played a very unimportant part even among the male workers [in the 1930s]. And some of the older workers would say, 'oh, don't mention unions to me, you know what happened the last time when we were out on strike for so many weeks and didn't get a ha'penny and didn't earn any money and went back for' - some people told me they actually went back for a ha'penny less than they went out at. So they got disgusted with the whole thing and it was later on... some of them must have had a talk with the dockin' crowd down here and they were always well organised: they were liable to strike, to have two dozen strikes in the one year whereas the factories had no strikes at all.

Mr Gordon told me that he had been told that 'the trade was never the same in Derry afterwards [ie after the strike]'; this comment was echoed by Mr Nelson. There is some support for Mr Matthews' explanation in the documentary record. In 1926, for example, the local organiser of the UGW, Annie Holmes, devoted one of her Branch reports (GW: December 1926) to a re-assessment of the strike in an effort to counter the adverse effects on her remaining male membership of what she claims was 'management propaganda':

Though Ireland did not participate in the General Strike [of 1926]... we had more than our share of the organised lies crammed into us by the press which can always be relied on to say Tweedle-dee to the British Capitalist Tweedle-dum... One can understand it may be easy to deceive people on matters of no immediate concern to themselves, but it is a matter of amazement to find that people will believe lies about things of which they have themselves personal knowledge concerning their individual acts and know from what source the lies emanate.

There is a fixed idea in the minds of people in Derry city, many of whom are in a position to know that such a view can only have emanated from the employers' propaganda, that the Cutters' strike in 1920 (shirt and collar trade) has killed the trade.

Every school boy knows that in 1921 the big slump in trade was a reality. Were the Derry cutters the cause of the

world slump in trade?.... But if the mentality of these people finds the general world position beyond its grasp what about the local position? Is every other trade in Derry better than the collar trade?

Examine those who did not have a strike. Before 1920 there were four large factories producing women's light clothing. There is only one small one now existing... Take the hosiery trade. Two large factories once, now reduced 70 per cent. In corset-making 600 workers were employed not one now employed. What of Derry port? Once world famous. Old residents are moved to tears at the sight of the deserted quays. The shipyard is closed. What of the distillery? Rumour says this was due to a quarrel between two unions. Not a word is said of the well known fact that America, a big customer of the distillery, went 'Dry,' therefore less demand...

What of the cost of production. We heard much of this in connection with the miners and German competition. If the British miners worked cheaper they would have more work. Well, the workers, men and women, in Derry work much cheaper than their British friends. Have they got the work? No! the supply gets less and less! Good pay promotes efficiency.

One never hears the same things said in Belfast or Dublin about the strike, yet Dublin men struck in 1920 with the Derry men and have not only kept UP the same wages but THEIR TRADE IS INCREASING [all capitals are Annie Holmes'] rapidly.

There has been far too long a field for the employers' dope. Let the workers, especially the Cutters, make up their minds to kill effectively this lying tale. Let them be as zealous in the workers' propaganda and hurl from the house tops if necessary the real truth.

One day a man came to our office to pay his contribution. He was not young. He was very earnest in his manner. The remark was made to him that he must have seen changes in the trade. His reply was convincing. 'I have been in the shirt trade for 30 years. In 1916 I had £1 per week for a wage, and that was not an isolated wage BUT THE CURRENT WAGE IN THE DISTRICT. When I got a MAN'S wage I FELT like a man and for that reason I will always PAY MY Society money IF I AM THE ONLY MAN LEFT IN DERRY TO PAY IT.

She returned to this theme in the following month's journal (GW: January 1927):

We pointed out in the December notes that propaganda had been undertaken in Derry after the 1920 strike in the Shirtmaking industry to obscure the real advantage and object of the Cutters' uprising...

To raise a 'Smoke Screen' is a favourite method of propagandists to cover up something more vital, the 'hidden' thing on this occasion being what has proved to be of great advantage to the cutters, namely, and advance of ½d. per hour on the Minimum (a comparatively small gain) to the real beneficial one which was that wages fixed by the Shirtmaking Trade Board in Ireland would be guided by the rates fixed by the Shirtmaking Trade Board, Great Britain.

This undertaking given by the Employers' Federation to the Garment Workers' Union (of which the Belfast and Derry cutters had become a part) has been kept and it is a fact [that] the rates of the cutters have been maintained during the slump in wages as among the highest rates in Ireland. No wonder it required a very large volume of black smoke to cover up this real advance in the Cutters' Charter. But it is only the first chapter. The apprentice question is next. Then holidays with pay!

However, it was not just disillusionment with the UGW which led shirt cutters to join the ATGWU rather than the UGW/NUTGW - the former was actively recruiting shirt cutters and female shirtmakers in Derry shirt factories in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The local secretary of the Derry Branch of the ASTT, Sarah Doherty, complained several times, to the Branch Committee and in the union journal, about the ATGWU poaching her organisation's members. One example is a letter printed in the journal of the ASTT,

protesting against the action of the Transport and General Workers' Union in still further splitting the interests of the Derry shirt workers at this juncture in view of the fact that for many years the two unions catering for sewing workers [i.e. the UGW and the ASTT] have spent thousands of pounds on the organisation of these workers. (Journal of the ASTT, March 1931; see also Journal of ASTT June 1930. And Minutes of the Londonderry Branch of the ASTT from July 1930 to December 1931).

The Executive Committee responded by sending a protest to the TUC. The 1932 national agreement between the ATGWU and the newly formed NUTGW seems to have been a response to this protest. The fact that shirt cutters - alone among clothing workers in the United Kingdom - were exempted from this national agreement and permitted to remain members of the ATGWU suggests that they were treated as a special case. A suggestion which is strengthened by the knowledge that a common story in local trade union circles was that the agreement was signed by the general secretaries of the NUTGW and ATGWU - Andrew Conley and Ernest Bevin - at 4.00 am in the Metropole hotel in Derry.

This settlement, and the ATGWU's monopoly on trade union membership among Derry shirt cutters went unchallenged until the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was the period when, following a series of vigorous organising campaigns, the NUTGW had gained a large membership among women shirtmakers and was proving effective in

negotiations with management. When Macgougan came to Derry in 1945 he worked within an interpretation of the 1932 agreement according to which 'the ATGWU organised shirt cutters.' He made use of a provision in the agreement which urged co-operation between the two unions to set up a joint committee to discuss matters of common interest - primarily the co-ordination of submissions to the Wages Council. McGonagle, on the other hand, interpreted the agreement differently and recruited some male shirt cutters. The NUTGW claimed to have 59 male members in 1950, but I would estimate that less than half of these were cutters. The highest figure for ATGWU membership among shirt cutters in the same period is 150 (DJ: 30 April 1954); this is probably inflated.

The fact that six of the cutters recruited into the NUTGW in the late 1940s had defected from the ATGWU led to a row between the two unions. McGonagle went on the offensive: at a meeting of the ATGWU/NUTGW joint committee held in May 1950 (see Minutes of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU, 18 May 1950), he read a copy of the 1932 agreement, and expressed 'surprise' that the ATGWU was organising garment workers in Derry. He argued that the NUTGW was the negotiating union in the industry and that the fact that the ATGWU had members in the shirt industry made decision-making difficult: he never knew what the shirt cutters in the ATGWU were going to do. A bitter argument ensued during which the assistant secretary of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU said that he would not permit McGonagle to use 'this meeting to organise his cutters' section.'

The members of Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU were vehemently opposed to McGonagle's attempt to recruit shirt cutters. Indeed, they defied their national officer, Mr Ryan, who, at a meeting held on 2 February 1951 (see minutes of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU), interpreted the 1932 national agreement to mean a one-way transfer from the ATGWU to the NUTGW except where a factory was 100% ATGWU, in which case the workers should not be divided 'a'. The members of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU had invited a retired local secretary of the ATGWU who had been present when the 1932 agreement had been signed along to their meeting; he interpreted the

agreement to mean that the 'ATGWU had a right to *male* workers and the NUTGW to *female* [my emphasis] workers'. The meeting ended with ATGWU cutters reiterating their refusal to 'hand over members to Stephen McGonagle'; demanding that the NUTGW return five of the ATGWU shirt cutters who had transferred to the NUTGW; drawing attention to 'all the transport union had done in the old days for them [shirt workers] when the other union [the UGW/NUTGW] was powerless'; and expressing resentment at McGonagle's behaviour. As a result, the ATGWU formally requested that the six ATGWU members who had defected to the NUTGW be returned. The NUTGW complied and decided that the only way to deal with the situation was to 'organise strongly' (Minutes of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW February and March 1951.).

Thus, although some shirt cutters responded readily to McGonagle's overtures most were very keen to remain members of the ATGWU and vehemently opposed to joining the NUTGW. The behaviour of the latter cannot be explained purely in terms of the superior strength of the ATGWU: the NUTGW was no longer the weak and ineffectual organisation which it had been in the 1930s. How then are the different responses of shirt cutters to McGonagle's challenge to be understood?

George Hamill told me that 'in the main,' the cutters who remained loyal to the ATGWU, 'were Unionists,' and that,

Whatever cutters McGonagle had, they were Catholics... the chap that stood with me [as an IrLP candidate in a Corporation election], he was chairman of McGonagle's Branch: Lorry Hegarty... he was one of the cutters in Wilkinson's factory at that time. And then you had Barney Donaghey and that chap Pat Hamill [no relation]... he was interested in McGonagle's Labour Party and the Labour Party I was in at one time along with McGonagle [the Labour Party concerned was the IrLP, see section 2.2 and chapter six], and so was Lorry Hegarty and people like that. It was mostly through McGonagle that they were interested.

It was not possible for me to interview a shirt cutter who joined the NUTGW in this period: none of the three men mentioned by George Hamill were alive when I carried out my research, and the one man I traced who fell into this category declined to be interviewed. Nevertheless, it is possible to elaborate on George Hamill's statement. Patrick Hamill actually joined the NUTGW c1945, and was in fact one of the leading opponents of Macgougan's sponsorship of

McGonagle for the post of Derry organiser of the NUTGW. But there is no doubt, as will be shown in the next chapter, that Patrick Hamill, Lawrence Hegarty, and Barney Donaghey became closely aligned with McGonagle. Political agreement was undoubtedly an aspect of this; however, it is also clear that they had been won over by McGonagle's dynamism as a trade union official, and this was perhaps the more important factor: at the joint ATGWU-NUTGW meeting held on 18 May 1950 Barney Donaghey is reported to have said that he had left the ATGWU and joined the NUTGW because the former gave him 'no service', and that when he wanted to 'find out anything' he had had to go to Stephen McGonagle.

The opposition of most shirt cutters to their being transferred to the NUTGW cannot be explained in terms of their political affiliations. To be sure, as Unionists they would have had little sympathy for McGonagle's anti-partitionist politics, but in this respect there was little to choose between the ATGWU and the NUTGW: George Hamill was as prominent in the IrLP as McGonagle. Indeed, at about the same time as McGonagle was challenging the ATGWU's monopoly on shirt cutters, George Hamill was coming under pressure from some of his Protestant members to curtail his political activities. Having told me that most of the shirt cutters who remained loyal to the ATGWU were Unionists, George Hamill went on to say:

we had to be diplomatic in some of the statements we would make as a matter of fact. I don't know if this is for [public consumption]... I suppose it doesn't matter now. You see I was very active - when I got the job [as an ATGWU official] in the Irish Labour Party that was formed after the whole break up of the NILP, and I was on the Executive Committee with McGonagle, a chap called Halley... and Harry Diamond [the last two named were socialist republicans based in Belfast] and I used to travel to Belfast fairly often. There was great resentment about me being active - especially with the busmen. And the chap that was shop steward for the busmen - he was a good trade unionist, but he was a very active member of the Black Perceptory and the Orange Lodge etc., and he resented very much me playing an active part, as a Transport and General Worker trade unionist, in the Irish Labour Party. And at that particular time you had a split in the bus organisation because you had a sort of Ulster allied type union, and he [the shop steward] was losing members and they said they [the Ulster allied union] was using my activities in this as a sort of propaganda. So Norman Kennedy [Hamill's superior in the union]... told me to present a fairly low profile because it was harming our membership.

Shirt cutters who were members of the ATGWU may not have liked Hamill's political affiliations, but it did not undermine their resolve to remain members of the union: it was some busmen who threatened to defect. Moreover, as we have seen, shirt cutters explained their strong, but anomalous, attachment to the ATGWU in terms an alliance with the dockers - an almost entirely Catholic group whose identification with Irish nationalism was well known⁴.

Mr Gordon's and Mr Matthews' views on the relationship between trade unionism, religion, and politics are complex. The former told me that he 'voted Unionist,' but that his political outlook did not influence his preference for the ATGWU rather than the NUTGW; nor did he think that political or religious differences undermined trade unionism in the shirt industry generally:

No, never any trouble that way. You were too busy making a living to worry about, to get political... no, no, we [the shirt cutters] were a pretty conservative crowd of trade unionists you know. You only join a trade union to get more money, just the same as any conservative, its the same difference.

Notwithstanding his self-professed Unionism and conservatism, Mr Gordon had little affection for management:

this town was sowed up by the bosses... suppose you were in Hamilton's factory and heard about a job in Harrison's and went to see about it, [Mr] Hamilton knew about it before you were out the back, freemasonry among them, they were all free-masons.

Moreover, he knew McGonagle through their common interest in fishing the river Faughan (a tributary of the Foyle), and professed a complete indifference to his politics: '[I] found him a civil enough man.'

Mr Matthews, on the other hand, could barely conceal his dislike of McGonagle. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Matthews was secretary of the Londonderry Branch of the NILP (ie the LDLP); the Party from which McGonagle and Hamill defected in 1948-1949 to join the IrLP. However, this was not the basis of Mr Matthews' distaste for McGonagle: he retained an 'open mind' on the question of a united Ireland, described the people who supported the IrLP in Derry as 'genuine people', and, as I have already noted, shared their disgust with the Unionist Gerrymander of the Corporation. Like Mrs

Henderson, Mr Matthews' opinion of McGonagle is based, more than anything else, on a feeling that he had acted in an underhand way during the setting up of the breakaway union in 1952. Moreover, he told me that,

My attitude, even from the very start - I paid into the Transport Workers' [Union, and] in those early days whatever few women were in a union... were in the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union, and the men in the Transport and General [Workers' Union] - I always said that the fact that we [male shirt cutters] were in the tailor and garment trade... we should by no means, under any circumstances, anybody, should be members of the Transport and General Workers' Union from an idealistic point of view. But these other fellas could point to you: 'well, if anything goes wrong and there's a bit of a strike, at least... when you're in the Transport and General Workers' Union you'd have the backing of what you call several other groups of workers.'

He did not respond to McGonagle's overtures to shirt cutters, but not because he disliked the man or disagreed with his politics; rather he did not join the ATGWU because he could not: during the Second World War Mr Matthews had been made a 'charge hand' in the cutting room of Bryce and Weston's factory, and he had let his membership of the ATGWU lapse because a charge hand was 'not expected', by management, to be a union member. In the early 1950s, following the closure of Bryce and Weston's, he was helping Fred Bryce to set up another factory in Derry. Mr Matthews did not become involved in trade unionism again until the 1960s when he was working as a senior cutter in a small factory owned by a Mr Szilagyi; he joined the NUTGW (see Appendix 1).

Mr Matthews did not think that political or religious considerations were significant in the decision of Protestant shirt cutters to join, and remain in, the ATGWU. He did, however, think that their position in the workplace influenced their political behaviour:

I was about the only one [Protestant cutter who supported the Labour Party]: everyone was afraid... [a few cutters] would be sympathetic, but wouldn't become members - they thought it would cost them their job. Even the boss in [Bryce and Weston's factory]... his attitude to me became very strained... [When] I was an ordinary member of the Labour Party, just went to ordinary meetings, nobody paid any attention. But [relations with the boss became strained when] later on I acted as... secretary of the Foyle Division... and secretary of the Central Party.

Moreover, although Mr Matthews collected dues for the ATGWU in the 1930s, he saw little connection between his political activity and his involvement in the ATGWU. His political activity did not emerge from his union activity - he was not very interested in trade unionism, he saw it as a necessity - rather it developed out a concern about the political stalemate in Derry and a feeling that the gerrymander '[w]asn't democracy.' He described the 'typical' view among the shirt cutters he knew in the following way:

If I'd said to George N. about gerrymandering - he'd be a typical Protestant, he'd be a great boy about the Orange Order - [he would reply] 'ah you have to keep things that way because the others [Catholics] would walk over ye'. But, says I, 'this isn't democracy, this is supposed to be a democratic state we're living in.'

To sum up. Most trade union minded shirt cutters in Derry revealed an enduring concern to belong to the ATGWU rather than the NUTGW. The shirt cutters' membership of the ATGWU was regarded as an anomaly by many trade unionists in the shirt industry, not least by shirt cutters themselves, but a ready explanation was at hand: the Derry Branch of the NUTGW was weak and ineffective by comparison to the ATGWU. This explanation is quite convincing in relation to the 1930s, but it is less so in relation to the 1940s and 1950s. In 1950 the local secretary of the NUTGW, Stephen McGonagle, challenged the the ATGWU's right to organise in the shirt industry. Some cutters responded by defecting to the NUTGW but most refused to give up their membership of the ATGWU. Those cutters who joined the NUTGW in the late 1940s and early 1950s were Catholics; those who remained in the ATGWU were Protestants. The former supported McGonagle's anti-partitionist labourism, but the principal attraction of the NUTGW seems to have been McGonagle's dynamism as a trade union leader. The majority of shirt cutters who resisted McGonagle's overtures were Unionists, but their determination to remain in the ATGWU cannot be explained in terms of their political or religious identities. George Hamill, the ATGWU official with responsibility for the shirt industry, was as well known for his anti-partitionist and left-wing views as McGonagle. Moreover, the cutters justified their membership of the ATGWU in terms of an alliance with a mainly Catholic and assertively nationalist group of workers, the dockers.

How, then, is the enduring and exceptionally strong attachment of most shirt cutters to the ATGWU, as opposed to the NUTGW, to be explained? One possibility is suggested by John McCorkell's statement to the effect that one of the reasons why shirt cutters originally defected from the UGW to the ATGWU was that,

The cutters were being undermined by women coming into the cutting room and they didn't like that... the men felt that they had been let down - the Garment Workers' [Union] was a strong union of women as against the ATGWU.

The rest of this chapter will be devoted to an exploration of this possibility.

5.3 Sex and Skill in the Derry Shirt Industry

Labour historians and industrial sociologists have long recognised that one of the most significant influences on British trade union structure - that is, 'the patterns of union organisation - the criteria of inclusion and exclusion, the lines of demarcation and division' (Hyman, 1979a: 36) - has been the exclusivism of skilled workers towards the unskilled. Marxists usually explain this disunity as a by-product of the class struggle; that is, as part of a resistance to employers' attempts to cheapen labour power by deskilling jobs and replacing craftsmen by less skilled workers. As Cockburn (1983: 151) notes, this kind of explanation has been adapted to explain the hostility and exclusivism of skilled men and their unions towards their female colleagues: women are often presented as the capitalist's preferred reserve of unskilled labour power.

Coyle's (1982) study of sex and skill in the British clothing industry provides an apposite example of what I shall refer to as 'the deskilling thesis' (cf Beechey, 1983: 41). Her primary concern is to explain the concentration of female clothing workers into low paid and unskilled jobs. She is not, therefore, concerned with the same problem as myself - the form and structure of trade union organisation in the industry. However, she explains women's occupational segregation in terms of their introduction to the clothing industry as a cheap unskilled labour force in the context of

the deskilling of a male craft, and, recognising that skill not just a question of 'expertise' but something which is 'socially constructed' (1982: 24) by organised workers, she comments on the relationship between sex, skill, and trade unionism in the industry. Thus she argues (1982: 22):

The [clothing] industry has always relied on women as cheap labour, but they have also been a direct agency of deskilling. As a form of female 'takeover' it gives rise to direct and obvious hostility towards women, and historically men have organised to keep women out of the industry... and out of certain jobs... In some industries men's strategies of exclusion have been more 'successful' [than in clothing]... Early strategies of exclusion employed by male clothing workers... have given way to unionisation but still men's defence of their skills is a contradictory procedure. As real skill differences are eroded, other forms of differentiation from unskilled labour are sought. Gender becomes a most obvious form of differentiation.

What she means by gender as 'a form of differentiation' is made clearer two pages further on (1982: 24):

Skill is a social construction as well as being founded on expertise, and when the differentiation of skilled and unskilled labour is posed in terms of male and female labour, it has a particularly wide social validation. Such differentiation has been a form of trade union organisation by which male trade unionists have both sought the restriction of women's employment and the maintenance of a larger 'breadwinner's' wage for men... Certainly the differentiation of men as breadwinners has often been a distinctive form of labour organisation in clothing.

In this section I will describe the sexual division of labour in the Derry shirt industry as it developed historically. The particular case of Derry will be elucidated by a comparison with Coyle's analysis of the British clothing industry as a whole. Having examined the sexual division of labour in the Derry shirt industry we will then be in a position to consider the extent to which the decision of men to join, and remain in, the ATGWU can be understood in terms of the deskilling thesis.

As I have already stated, Coyle presents the clothing industry as a male craft which has been deskilled. She writes that

The traditional method of production is known as 'making through' and this was defined by the Board of Trade in 1947 as 'the making of a garment by a single skilled worker'. Under the 'making through' system it was often the case that the main assembly was undertaken by a single skilled worker

(male), whilst less skilled operations, such as the sewing of button holes and pockets, were undertaken by his assistants (men and women). (1982: 13).

Deskilling was effected during the inter-war period in the transition from workshop to factory production and involved the substitution of craftsmen by 'female machine minders'. According to Coyle, the result is a,

concentration of men in the cutting room and the stock room, and an absolute mushrooming of managerial and supervisory jobs for men. Once men were involved in the making of a garment but, now deskilled, it has become 'women's work'. (1982: 14).

Despite deskilling, Coyle argues (1982: 15) that male cutters have been able to maintain their skilled status:

In looking at men's jobs in the clothing industry, it becomes apparent how skill is socially constructed in the context of changing technology. Skill is as much about job control and wage levels as it is about technique. Men in the industry are now employed in the cutting room, the stock room, and in supervisory roles. The cutting room is a male stronghold. Men lay the cloth, lay the pattern on the fabric, mark the fabric, and cut the fabric. The craft basis of these operations was undermined by the introduction of machines in the inter-war period, notably the bandsaw. The bandsaw requires a great deal of concentration, certainly looks dangerous and an error would be expensive since several layers of cloth are cut in one operation. It is a moot point, however, whether its operation requires the three-year apprenticeship (once seven years) which the NUTGW insist upon. (Women have done this work, but informally, and usually in small non-unionised factories). The technical basis of men's skills has been eroded in the cutting room by certain machines, but the relative level of technical development is quite low, and elements of job control remain. As other men's jobs have been deskilled and lost, the cutting room has become a kind of retreat. Inside the cutting room men defend their wages and skill differentials.

The sexual division of labour in Derry's shirt industry reveals several formal similarities with Coyle's description of the clothing industry. Shirt cutting is the only process in which a significant number of men are employed, it has some of the formal attributes of a skilled trade: male shirt cutters served an apprenticeship of 5-7 years in the 1920s and 1930s - nowadays it is three years - and command the highest wage rates in the industry. The tasks of assembling and finishing the shirts are done by women who, though not

apprenticed, undergo a recognised period of training; female trainees were once known as 'learners.'

These similarities are analogous rather than homologous. Coyle presents the cutting room as a place into which men have retreated as more and more of the processes involved in garment assembly - formerly a male craft - were deskilled and taken over by cheap female labour. As we have seen (see section 2.3), shirtmaking developed in a very different way: it was never a male craft. Prior to the development of shirtmaking on a commercial basis in the mid nineteenth century, shirts were made within the domestic unit as required by members of that unit (Hamilton, 1955: 6). In the early stages of factory production, the shirts were cut in workshops located in Derry; sent, via a network of 'outstations' located in the surrounding countryside, to be stitched by the wives and daughters of tenant farmers; and then returned to the city to be laundered and 'finished.' After the introduction of the sewing machine, stitching operations - performed by women - were gradually concentrated in factory buildings in the city (see Grew, 1987: *passim*).

The women shirtmakers whom I interviewed remembered several occasions during their careers when the idea of employing men as sewing machinists or in the laundry was mooted by individual managers, but it was rarely put into practice and never with much success: at the turn of the century boys were employed to press shirts in Tillie and Henderson's factory as an 'interesting experiment' (The North of Ireland (Illustrated) Up-to-Date, N.D. c1900: 18); and Mr McDonald told me that 30 men had been employed in a local Ben Sherman factory when he had been a junior manager there in the late 1960s. In the latter case, the men were employed for two years until the factory was 're-engineered' (ie a change in the organisation of production following a work study) and then either left or were made redundant because - according to the manager - they were unable to work at the speed required.

In view of the chronic shortage of jobs for men in Derry, the fact that so few of the schemes to employ men as sewing machinists were successful is, perhaps, indicative of the extent to which it was

seen as a 'women's work'. Mr McDonald told me that it had been difficult to recruit men as sewing machinists: those who had applied for the job were either old tailors or 'effeminate.' Moreover, all the managers I talked to doubted that men had the manual dexterity necessary to do the job. Moreover, women shirtmakers were opposed to the employment of men as sewing machinists. Miss Gallagher told me,

Sometimes these English managers came over and suggested it [i.e., employing men as sewing machinists], I knew of one... but he soon had to forget it: Derry women would have rebelled.

Miss Cosgrave told me,

It was discussed at the union... Branch meetings... about teaching the young boys [to operate a sewing machine], but there's nothing ever came of it... I don't think the [union was in favour of it] because I'll tell you why... the boys would have had to get a higher rate of wages than the girls and that never would have worked out.

Thus, unlike the British clothing industry, shirtmaking was not a deskilled male craft: the jobs done by women were always done by women. However, according to McCorkell, it was the introduction of women into cutting which the men who joined the ATGWU in 1920 'didn't like'; therefore, before rejecting the deskilling thesis, it is necessary to examine the historical development of shirt cutting as a skilled trade. Coyle, as we have seen, presents cutting in the British clothing industry as a 'retreat' which men have tried, quite successfully, to defend against deskilling and encroachment by women. My respondents presented a more complex and contradictory picture. On the one hand, they described shirt cutting as a skilled male trade to which - because of the dearth of skilled jobs for men in Derry - a considerable status accrued; for example, Mr McCorkell told me, all be it with a laugh: 'you were an outstanding gentleman, particularly if you were a special [pattern] cutter.' On the other hand, they reveal a high degree of uncertainty about both the skilled, and the masculine, status of their job. To be sure, shirt cutting has, as we have seen, the formal attributes of a skilled trade, but they felt this to be a bit of a sham.

Judging from Coyle's description, the detailed processes involved in cutting shirts were more or less the same as those involved in cutting other garments. In Derry, however, the various

tasks were named differently. Laying the cloth was known as 'laying-up' or 'carting', and the person who performed this operation was referred to as a 'layer-up'; marking the cloth with the pattern was known as 'pencilling,' and the person who performed this task was referred to as a 'penciller'; and what Coyle refers to as a 'bandsaw' was known in Derry as a 'bandknife.' Moreover, my respondents included two tasks within the category of shirt cutting which Coyle does not mention. One was 'pattern-cutting' or 'shape-cutting' which involved the design and making of the patterns which were used to mark the cloth. The other was 'putting-up' which involved sorting the cut cloth into bundles according to colour, the decorative pattern on the cloth, and shirt size; these bundles of work were sent to the sewing machinists for assembly.

As Coyle points out (1982: 15), the level of technical development in cutting was 'quite low', and my respondents did not, in general, perceive new machinery or techniques to be a threat to their skilled status. Of the cutters I spoke to only McCorkell was familiar with the concept of 'deskilling' which probably reflects the fact that after he left Derry he became an NUTGW official. He drew attention to two techniques which were introduced into Derry cutting rooms in the 1920s which he considered to be part of a process of deskilling. One was the use of electrically powered carts to lay the cloth. Another was pencilling by means of a perforated pattern and a blue powder to mark the cloth. Only one other cutter mentioned the latter, so it was not used extensively throughout the industry probably because although it speeded up the process, the commoner system of marking by hand was less wasteful of cloth. Mr Matthews did not talk in terms of deskilling but he described the effect of the decline in demand for collar-detached shirts on his job, collar pattern-cutting, in a way which indicates a significant loss of skill:

The man who was always looked-up-to in the cutting room, even in the late '20s and mid '30s, a firm who had a good pattern-cutter had somebody... worth their weight in gold. The collar pattern-cutting when I went in [to it] was a trade in itself... they were artists in their own way. I was transferred from the pattern-cutting of the collar end: it started to deteriorate, and the Second World War started, that changed the whole aspect of things. The loose collar started to disappear off the market - not immediately of course. You've heard of the trubenised collar, it was a

wonderful invention... it changed the whole aspect of things... trubenising^(s) came in shortly after the Second World War.

Contrary to what Coyle asserts, none of my respondents - all apprenticed in the inter-war period - mentioned the bandknife as a novel technique which supplanted skill. In fact, the evidence suggests that the bandknife was introduced into the shirt industry much earlier than Coyle would lead one to believe. Derry shirt manufacturers were experimenting with steam driven cutting machines as early as 1860 (Slade 1937), and 'a power-driven hand-knife, similar to that used in a saw mill' was in common use in Derry factories by 1912 (LS: 19 October 1912).

A much more significant threat to shirt cutters' status as skilled tradesmen was the tendency, particularly in the larger factories to sub-divide the labour process into specialised jobs whereby apprentices were trained to be layers-up, pencillers, bandknife operators, or putters-up, with no experience outside their particular job or grasp of the trade as a whole. Mr Matthews told me:

In a big factory... when you went into a cutting room you had a job to do, but in a small factory you were expected to put your hand to everything. It [shirt cutting] was a funny kind of trade, it was a trade and it wasn't a trade. Willie Dornan [a friend]... I got him started with Szilagy [the owner of a small factory where Matthews worked in the 1960s]. He'd a row in Tillie's, and he [had] worked there from a young boy. He became a very efficient machine man, bandknife cutter, but outside of that - says I, 'put your hand to this or that,' says he, 'I wouldn't know where to start,' says I, 'well, I'll teach ye,' and he always used to say, 'I learnt more in the three years along with you than in the 40 years [in Tillie's].' Because he was just put to the one job and he was happy with that: less responsibility just... The man who was kept to the one job all the time, he became more expert and more efficient. Didn't they refer to that as rationalisation of labour? That was one of the terms they used at the time I used to go to economic schools, old Workers Education Association.

And George Hamill told me that apprenticeships in shirt cutting were,

nearly as formal [as in engineering] because the shirt and collar industry was working under Wages Council rules and the Wages Council had left down stipulations for cutters. But I always objected: the employers to all intents and purposes didn't carry out the regulations that was on the Wages Council for cutters because one of the stipulations

was that they were to get a good knowledge of the different parts of cutting skills. Well, sometimes they were kept in there and put at one particular thing, maybe cutting with a knife, cutting with an automatic hand knife, and they weren't given proper training at pencilling and bandknife cutting and laying-up and all the different aspects of cutting. And you found out sometimes when the time and motion men came into the factory and wanted to make changes and switch round and you found out that you had a cutter who was supposed to be a full-time man could only do one aspect of the job.

The uncertainty and insecurity which this system gave rise to may be illustrated by a few quotes. Mr Matthews elaborated on his description of shirt cutting as, 'a funny kind of trade, it was a trade and it wasn't a trade,' in the following way:

take the tailoring establishments over in England, there was quite a lot of men involved there; highly skilled men too, much more highly skilled than shirt cutters.

When I asked Mr Gordon if he regarded shirt cutting as a skilled job, he replied:

You want my opinion here? My opinion about it all is that the whole thing was really semi-skilled work but the boys made a trade out of it. They got into a union and made a trade out of it, and right enough if they hadn't a' done that they wouldn't have been paid. But, I don't know about shape-cutting, but you could actually get a boy into it [who was] anyway clever at measurements and he could work it out... it was really a semi-skilled trade, they made a trade, they got into the union, and right enough if they hadn't have banded into the union they wouldn't a been paid.

Mr Gordon presented himself as a 'square peg in a round hole' in the sense that he regarded himself as a 'countryman' who worked in a factory. Consequently, he may have had an unusually negative view of shirt cutting, but it is worth detailing the dismal picture which he presented: he referred to a particular factory as a 'jail of a factory'; he described cutting as

a cheap, back street, Lancashire, job. The cloth was full of lime... if you stood at Derry bridge there at dinner hour or at six o'clock at night you could've picked out the shirt cutters coming across the bridge: they were grey in the face, their clothes were gray... like something out of Belsen;

he talked of the envy which he felt on his way to work one day when he saw a Council workman out in the open air cutting grass, 'and me a tradesman and him only a labourer!'; and when he finally left the trade to become a caretaker, he was, 'glad to get out of it... if

there'd been any work going in Derry there wouldn't been a man in a shirt factory.'

The cutters whom I interviewed spoke of cutting as a male preserve, into which a few women had, gradually, been introduced to do the less skilled jobs such as laying-up and putting-up, and, occasionally a more skilled job such as pencilling. For example, according to Mr McCorkell women were introduced to cutting in the context of technical changes - changes which he had previously described as deskilling:

laying-up or hooking-up - first of all there was hooking-up - then we got to the stage we got carts [ie carts used to lay-up the cloth], and then the girls started to come in, they pushed the carts... [that was] when I was about 15 years of age [ie 1920]... [there was] very, very, few [women working in the cutting room before that], if there was I didn't know about them... And then we used to have men laying out the lays and they put the shapes in - of the shirts and the sizes - and pencilled them in. Then we got the idea we would [use] the perforations, and we were able to bring a women into it then and she put the cloth down, put this perforation, a blue dye [was used to] mark the cloth, and another group of women came in... we got then to the stage where we were able to eliminate the men on these jobs... Then we got the small cutters... the wee blade went up and down and split the shirt lays into small sizes... then they [the lays] were taken over... and layed beside the bandknife and thats were they - eventually fronts, backs, sleeves, and yokes - were cut to go to the machine room... and that was the process in the cutting room.

Mr Matthews told me that 'cutting was mostly a man's job'; of the 30 workers employed in Bryce and Weston's cutting room when he started his apprenticeship in 1926, only seven were women and they were employed only as 'stampers' (this involved marking the shirt size and brand name on collars and, though usually carried out in the cutting room, was not considered part of the trade):

The cutting end was completely male dominated when I went in, and the first girl that I saw coming into Bryce and Weston's cutting room, she came from Portrush... was trained as a penciller or marker of lays... that was in the shirt end of the trade. But in the collar end of the trade - the white collar trade - I never saw a female working in that trade in those days.

Mr Nelson also described cutting as a 'man's job... men always outnumbered women in the cutting room.' He claimed not to have seen a woman pencil until after the Second World War, but conceded that when he started in the McIntyre, Hogg, and Marsh's factory in the

early 1930s women were employed to lay-up and put-up. Mr McDonald told me that the few women who worked in the cutting room were regarded as 'interlopers.'

However, there is clear evidence that women were employed to do shirt cutting jobs - including pencilling - from a much earlier stage in the development of the industry, and in greater numbers, than my respondents suggested. For example, The North of Ireland (Illustrated) Up-to-date (N.D. c1900: 17-18) describes shirt cutting in Tillie and Henderson's factory in the following way:

Ascending to the next floor, we are introduced to the shirt cutting department of the factory; part of the equipment of this flat is six steam-powered cutting machines of the latest type, each capable of cutting through 100 thicknesses of cloth in one operation. The material for this purpose is first measured out, folded, and marked from the various metallic patterns by a large staff of intelligent girls, previous to being handed over to the men at the cutting tables.

The Londonderry Sentinel (19 October 1912) also mentions women as layers-up and pencillers:

Commencing at the piece stock room, one sees miles of white long cloth, printed cottons and linens, neatly arranged in fixtures from which they are taken to the cutting room; here girls hook-up the material into the right lengths to fulfil the orders before them.

Others [ie other women] are marking-out the various parts of the shirt on to the cloth, using cardboard patterns as their guide. The cloth is then handed to the men to cut.

Some idea of the numbers of women employed as shirt cutters can be gleaned from the 1926 and 1951 censuses⁽⁶⁾. In 1926 a total of 345 cutters were resident in the city; 269 were men and 76 were female. In the 1951 census two grades of cutter are distinguished: 'skilled cutters' and 'knife or machine cutters'. The total in the former category was 4, 1 man and 3 women; the total in the latter category was 278, 226 men and 52 women.

Notwithstanding his description of shirt cutting as 'male dominated', Mr Matthews conceded that:

Most factories employed girls, I would say Bryce and Weston's was one of the most unusual factories - not that I moved a big lot at that time [ie in the inter-war period] - but I heard of girls working, quite alot of girls did carting or the laying... it was quite a manual job in them days, lifting heavy webbs on... these trolleys, they're...

mechanised now.

Mr Gordon took the employment of women as carters, putters-up, and pencillers, for granted: he told me that when he started his apprenticeship in the Hamilton's factory in 1930 the cutting room staff consisted of six men and six women:

There was Mabel McC [she] was a penciller, she could have worked out a rate and she could have cut it fine: instead of taking four yards to a shirt she would have took two. There was her... five or six girls, pencilling or carting or pencilling and carting... then there'd be the stock room man, there'd be a young fella or maybe two young fellas a lay. You're [a gesture towards me] the bandknife man and they [ie the young men or apprentices] would have been splitting cuts: one'd be carting, taking cloth back and forward, [that is] the first job you'd get [as an apprentice]; the other would be splitting cuts with a Niesman knife [hand held knife] on the table, and then there was me [operating a bandknife], and two young fellas, that was all. And in Hamilton's the stock room man was the foreman, you see, to get the orders out. The collar room it was a separate cutting room and you had the foreman there, a bandknife man, a couple of table boys - apprentices at the table, one or two.

Thus, although the shirt cutters I spoke to presented shirt cutting as a male trade, they were aware that a significant number of women were involved in particular aspects of the production process, including pencilling. However, they were adamant that women never operated the bandknife. For example Mr Gordon asserted that, 'they'd [women] never have been near a [band]knife - just table work, pencilling, and carting, thats all they done.'

Under what terms and conditions were women employed in the cutting room? Laying-up, putting-up, and pencilling were performed by both male and female workers, but, although they were all a recognised part of the shirt cutting trade, the women employed to do these jobs, unlike the men, did not undergo an apprenticeship. For example, Mr Gordon told me:

Mabel could pencil out... Mabel used to train wee girls to pencil, she had them in tears, broke their hearts for six months or a year, but by the time she had finished with them they were good pencillers.

I asked, 'would those wee girls have been an apprentice like a boy?' He replied, 'no, no, never.' I asked, 'but they would have learnt the trade?' He replied, 'they would have learnt that [my emphasis] trade right enough.'

Women working in the cutting room were paid less than a journeyman cutter. It is not possible to specify the size of the differential or to trace movements in it. First, because the wages of women working in the cutting room were not formalised in the same way, ie by Wages Council orders, that other workers' wages were. Second, because the wages system in shirt cutting was quite complex and varied between and within particular cutting rooms: pattern cutters were paid on a time basis and their minimum rate, as laid down by Wages Council, was higher than 'ordinary' cutters; some 'ordinary' cutters were paid a piece-rate, others were paid on a time basis, and others, after 1948, on a time and bonus basis (more recently, the bonus was sometimes calculated for the cutting room as a whole rather than for individual workers). Third, because workers did not usually tell each other their wages. Nevertheless, all my respondents, men and women, agreed that women pencillers, layers-up, and putters-up, earned less than men doing the same jobs. For example, Mrs Henderson (who as NUTGW shop steward represented women in the cutting room of McCarthy's factory) told me:

In the cutting room I seen the girls doing the very same work as the men and their pay was shocking compared to what the men was getting... carting and laying, I seen women doing that job and the men coming out with £10 and £20 more than the girls... in McCarthy's.

To sum up. The sexual division of labour in the Derry shirt industry is similar to that in the British clothing industry in general: men are concentrated in shirt cutting; the assembly and finishing of shirts is 'women's work'. Shirtmaking is different from other sectors of the clothing industry in that this division of labour did not result from the deskilling of a male craft. However, shirt cutting was, in itself, subject to a process of deskilling. Shirt cutting had (and has) many of the formal attributes of a skilled male trade, but in practice it was broken down into a number of discrete and specialised tasks, and apprentices did not usually receive an all round training. Moreover, women were frequently employed - at significantly lower wage rates than journeymen - to do not just the marginal, less skilled, aspects of shirt cutting such as laying-up and putting-up, but also pencilling which was considered to be a central, skilled, part of the trade.

5.4 Trade Unionism and the Politics of Skill

I now want to consider how far Derry shirt cutters' anomalous membership of the ATGWU and their determination to resist inclusion in the NUTGW can be explained in terms of the process of deskilling described in the last section.

There is no doubt that the shirt cutters' membership of the ATGWU was symptomatic of a desire to belong to a different union from women shirt workers. This is particularly evident in relation to those women who worked in the cutting room. Thus, although the ATGWU was 'the union for shirt cutters' it was not the union for women who worked in the cutting room. Such women were not formally excluded from the ATGWU, but they were certainly not encouraged to join and in some cases they seem to have been actively discouraged. For example, Mr Gordon told me that the women who worked in his cutting room,

weren't in a union... they could have joined the the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union, you see I was in the Transport and General which wasn't really a union for cutters at all... I'm sure they [women] could have [joined the ATGWU], they wouldn't have been refused, but I used to hear some of the men saying [emphatically] 'worst thing they ever done [was let] the women into the union.' But I don't know: there was some women militant enough to join a union, but they never - as far as I mind - they never were in a union. They could have been in the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union, a big lot of them across the water maybe were, you know, but not in Derry.

As Cockburn (1983: 33) notes, even the print unions - perhaps the most exclusive and masculist of all trade unions - never, not even in the late nineteenth century, had

explicit written rules barring women. They did not need to... there was an effective informal exclusion.

One of the men's main concerns was that women who worked in the cutting room were paid less than they were. Mr Matthews told me:

In those days a woman wasn't paid the same rate... once a woman was brought into the cutting room - as I said about that girl Burns - some of the older men, they objected, but they didn't make a big lot of it [ie their opposition was not a success]... And the trade union at that time, there was two groups, you see the factory workers in Derry were never united in Derry. The men were nearly all attached to the Transport and General Workers' Union and the girls were almost entirely attached to the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union and that was the difference; so they had nothing

really in common at all and of course the male was always much better paid than the female so the way they looked upon it... once you bring girls into the cutting room they always looked at it: they'll be brought in for cheap labour.

Mr Gordon was even more definite:

as I used to hear... whenever we were working together, we were out of time of course [ie finished their apprenticeship]: 'now look boys we are in the Transport and General Workers' [Union] that's not the union for us at all; the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] should be.' But we never joined the darn Garment Workers' [Union] and I think the reason for that was there were some women in it and the men didn't want the women - [the women] were a weak link. Some of them women, you see the boss, 'oh Mr so and so, oh, we'll come in and work for nothing for Mr so and so.' That's the way it was you see they fell down and worshipped the boss, you had to watch that you know.

As part of a general and wide-ranging conversation after the interview was over, Mr Gordon repeated his view that although the NUTGW was the 'proper' union for shirt cutters it 'hadn't the clout of the ATGWU,' and, 'nobody wanted the women in the union, some of them would have licked the boss's ass'.

Thus, the deskilling thesis goes some way towards explaining why most shirt cutters joined the ATGWU rather than the NUTGW, and why they strongly resisted inclusion in the latter. I once thought that this was sufficient explanation (see Finlay, 1987) for the behaviour of Derry shirt cutters; now I am not so sure. Cockburn's (1983) study of male compositors in the British printing industry suggests another kind of interpretation of the relationship between trade unionism, sex and skill. She criticises (1983: 151) those who explain,

the aggressiveness of craftsmen and their unions towards women as potential rivals for work... as an inevitable by-product of the men's class struggle with the employer. 'They were only defending themselves against the employer's exploitation of women as cheap labour.'

She argues that,

The conflict cannot be reduced to the single dimension of class... Had nothing but class interest been at stake, the men would have found women acceptable as apprentices, would have fought whole heartedly for equal pay for women and for the right of women to keep their jobs at equal pay. As it was the men and their unions sought to have the women removed from the trade. The arguments used by the men against the women differed from those used against male

rivals. They expressed the interests of men in the social and sexual subordination of women.

Cockburn's argument does not apply in relation to Derry shirt cutters with same force as it does to print workers. The latter were a well organised and cohesive group of men who self-consciously constructed and defended their identity as a skilled workers. In the nineteenth century they gained control of entry to the print trade by 'staking exclusive claim of members of the societies [ie unions] to practice it [ie the trade] and limiting entry to the societies' (Cockburn, 1983: 21). The apprenticeship system was an integral part of this strategy: the printers insisted on long apprenticeships, and enforced rules governing the ratio of apprentices to journeymen and the type of work that apprentices could do. However, shirt cutters in Derry were unable to establish control over entry to their trade. In 1926, Annie Holmes, Derry organiser of the UGW, wrote:

There are signs that the important issue of the proper training of youths entering the Garment industry are to be catered for. The Executive [of the UGW] are studying the question and resolutions on the same subject from the London, Paisley, Bristol, and Edinburgh Branches ensure the subject being discussed at the General Conference in August. No Branch is more concerned with this question than Derry, the home and pioneer of the Shirt and Collar Industry, though it cannot be claimed that Derry workers have realised their responsibility in this matter. The amalgamation of the Shirt and Collar Cutters' Union of Ireland with the Garment Workers' Union, 1919, had two effects on this side. Hitherto the Irish Cutters' Union had been totally ineffective on national questions affecting wages were now able through the Amalgamation to enforce the minimum wage for the cutters, more important still these rates were maintained throughout Ireland during the slump period when every other trade was suffering severe 'Cuts.' On the other hand the Cutters made a mistake by believing that the whole of their welfare was bound up in wages, and they neglected to deal locally with their employers on local questions requiring local knowledge and industrious research applied to local needs. They found the benefit of the Amalgamation and proceeded then to leave everything to their Executive, a big mistake on such questions, for example as the Regulation of Apprentices, Payment of Holidays, Regulation of Overtime etc. No question has suffered more by this neglect than the apprentice question, which ought to be studied from a two-fold point of view - first the question of the proper training of boys (we leave the question of female training for future discussion). The boys entering into the industry should be taken in hand by an experienced Journeyman, and taught his trade throughout... Not only

that, but if the man was a good Society man, as good workers always are, he would train the boy to be a good Trade Unionist...

The second object would be the equally important regulation of the flow of apprentices into the trade. At present, certainly in Derry, there are far too many apprentices. It has a two-fold bad effect, as there are too many to be trained it is not possible to give the same time or care to impart information to the boys. Secondly... as Derry is no longer able to command the whole of the industry as she has done previously, there is not sufficient work now for those who must seek a living in this industry, and in the last two years during the slump in trade we have had the very sad spectacle of witnessing adult male cutters walking the street searching for work while youths from 16 to 20 have been working, obviously they were cheaper to employ.

The Derry Branch have repeatedly requested the cutters to meet and take up this question, but have not been able to fully impress the importance of this to the cutters, but the question remains and must be tackled...

It has also been brought to my notice by branches in England where some of our members have emigrated that these men have only been taught one section of the trade, and I raised the matter at a meeting of the Northern Ireland Shirtmaking Trade Board, asking for better facilities to be provided for the training of boys, but the matter did not proceed much further, and I am convinced that it will only be effectively... settled by the Irish Branches themselves supported by their Executive. (GW: July 1926).

Thus, unlike print workers, shirt cutters in Derry were in no position to insist on apprenticeships and equal pay for women who worked in the cutting room. But one can be quite sure that this would not have been the strategy which the shirt cutters would have pursued even if they had had the choice: like the print workers, shirt cutters attempted to prevent women from entering the trade. The fact that these attempts failed does not alter the point. There are several examples. As we have seen, Mr Matthews recalled that several of 'the older men' in the cutting room of Bryce and Weston's factory had objected when Miss Burns was being trained as a penciller, but that they were unable 'to make much of it.' In the Garment Worker (August 1929) Edward McCafferty, then Irish regional organiser of the UGW, reported:

I had occasion to visit Derry regarding the dismissal of two cutters and the introduction of female labour in the cutting room of one of the largest factories. In an interview with the firm I got an assurance that there would be no further dismissals, that they were not desirous of introducing any new system, and the firm agreed to pay £3 to each of the dismissed men. The matter does not rest

there, and I wish to warn our members in Derry that only 100 per cent organisation can effectively deal with matters of this kind.

A more recent example comes from the Minutes of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU (8 September 1952): 'brother' Brown told the Committee that a 'girl' had been employed in the cutting room of Harrison's factory. The Committee passed a motion 'strongly object[ing] to any girl being re-introduced to the cutting room'. In the light of these examples, it is worth exploring Cockburn's argument further.

Cockburn urges that we should locate the industrial strategies of male trade unionists in the context of the way in which masculinity and femininity are constructed in society. This is part of a more general theoretical argument about the need to see 'capital not just as an economic category but as a relation between human beings' (1983: 5), and the need to understand capitalist society not just as a 'class system' but also as a 'sex-gender system'. Thus, she argues (1983: 117)

skill as a political concept is more far reaching than the class relations of capitalism - it plays an important part in the power relations between men and women... over very long periods of patriarchal time women's particular abilities have been arbitrarily valued lower than those of men... the skill attributed to a job has more to do with the sex of the person who does it than the real demands of the work.

The antagonism of skilled men towards women and less skilled men is about more than pay differentials:

Listening to the skilled man's account of his relationship to the less skilled, it is impossible not to sense a competitiveness and fear that has a sexual basis. (Cockburn, 1983: 135).

We have already seen that shirt cutters were concerned to represent their trade as an essentially masculine one. Nowhere is that concern more apparent than in relation to the bandknife. The shirt cutters that I spoke to were prepared to concede that women worked as layers-up, putters-up, and pencillers, but they were insistent that, in Derry at least, women never operated the bandknife. Mr McCorkell told me that he and his workmates regarded the introduction of women to laying-up as

a great novelty - thats a joke of course. There wasn't any

great opposition... in fact the men were glad because it was a monotonous job walking up and down with this cart 'till it got electrified of course, I don't want to jump centuries

But, when he was talking about the 1920 strike he suggests that the strikers were anxious about the possibility that women might have been employed to operate the bandknives:

The cutters could have got it [their strike demand] but this question of - we didn't want to divorce the women from the men... but we couldn't very well let the women down. Because if we had lost the women - women were 'starting to come into the cutting room and couldn't they have used the bandknife cutters eventually. Though it was the danger of the bandknives that was the problem for women, that's why they didn't get using them... Oh, they [the women] were locked-out because they couldn't use the bandknives. And from memory I'm quite certain that the inspectors, the factory inspectors, said that no way would they agree to women using the bandknives... Oh, we were totally against that [women using the bandknife], that was the last bastion of the cutters, the only strength we had.

Although Coyle writes that women were only very rarely employed to work at the bandknife in English clothing factories, Mr Matthews and Mr Gordon were convinced that it was commonplace, and used it as something with which to taunt their more arrogant colleagues. For example, Mr Gordon told me:

I heard... there was some of these boys worked across in England, some of these cutter fellas, and there was some factory, it was about the Yorkshire area, and they put women to the bandknife - I only heard it like a couple of boys talking - they put women to the bandknife and they had to take them off: they were cutting themselves... you leave your fingers on the table on a bandknife. I never seen them [women] working a bandknife, but one night I was at the pictures [cinema], and I used to tell these boys - you know the cutters [who claimed] 'aw, I'm the best cutter in Derry and all,' you know, and they bragged-up and they'd maybe [get a] ha'penny an hour more you see - I used to tell them, says I, 'look, I was at the pictures the night, you can go to the Midland [cinema] and look at it, they're making flags... and they were cutting out Union Jacks' - it was comin' up the Coronation I think, that bunting stuff... 'there was an owl woman standing cutting [with a] bandknife, go on down and you'll see the woman cutting the bandknife!' [laughs]... they wouldn't believe it - you just couldn't tell them... I do know one thing, that any employer is generally going to cut down on wages to get work done and I'm sure if he could have had women at the bandknife and all the rest of it he would have had them. It might have been... that just because we were in a union that they let us, they kept the men at the bandknife end of it.

To sum up. The deskilling thesis helps to elucidate the behaviour of Derry shirt cutters. But it was not simply because the women who worked in the cutting room were paid less than men that the latter choose to set themselves apart. The evidence suggests that shirt cutters were also concerned to maintain their identity as skilled male workers. As Cockburn (1983: 137) has argued in relation to the compositors whom she interviewed:

It matters crucially that their masculinity, as they have defined themselves, is never in doubt. It is often felt to be challenged, and it is just as often re-asserted. One form taken by this re-assertion has been the preservation, until recently, of craft unions as all-male institutions, clubs from which women were excluded.

Joining the ATGWU was one of the few ways in which cutters in the Derry shirt industry - an overwhelmingly female industry - could assert what they saw as the essentially masculine status of their work.

5.5 Conclusion

One of the major structural divisions running through the history of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry has been that between male shirt cutters and female shirtmakers. The former were mainly Protestants and the latter mainly Catholics. Such divisions have been the subject of some discussion in the literature on the early Belfast trade union movement. The discussion has taken the form of speculation about whether the indifference and contempt of organised male workers towards female linen workers derived from the fact that the latter were skilled men and the former women, or whether it derived from the fact that the former were Protestants and many of the latter Catholics. In this chapter I have explored the divisions between male shirt cutters, female shirtmakers, and their unions in an effort to determine the part played by sex, skill, and sectarianism.

Derry shirt cutters recognised that their membership of the ATGWU rather than the NUTGW was anomalous. They explained how the anomaly arose in terms of the failure of the 1920 strike, the

organisational weakness of the NUTGW in the 1930s, and the power which accrued to the ATGWU by virtue of the dockers' ability to embargo factories. This is a cogent explanation; however, the attachment of shirt cutters to the ATGWU and their aversion to the NUTGW persisted even when the 1920 strike was only dim and garbled story, and long after the Derry Branch of the NUTGW had been reconstructed as an impressive and effective organisation.

There is no doubt that underlying the conjunctural factors cited by shirt cutters when I asked them why they were members of the ATGWU rather than the NUTGW was an abiding concern about the employment of women in the cutting room. In part, this concern was linked to the fact that women who worked in the cutting room had not served an apprenticeship and were paid lower wage rates than a journeyman: the women were perceived as a financial threat. However, the shirt cutters' organisational separatism cannot be explained in terms of a simple deskilling thesis. Shirt cutters were not only worried about wage differentials, they felt insecure about the status of shirt cutting as a skilled male trade. Membership of the ATGWU was a way of distinguishing themselves from women workers and of asserting their masculinity.

The role of sectarianism in this process of organisational differentiation was marginal. To be sure, when Stephen McGonagle, the local secretary of the NUTGW, challenged the ATGWU monopoly on shirt cutters in the late 1940s and early 1950s he succeeded in attracting a small number of Catholic cutters to his union, and all but a few of the majority of shirt cutters who remained in the ATGWU were Protestants. However, the actions of neither group of cutters can be construed as sectarian. McGonagle was a member of the anti-partitionist IrLP and the Catholic shirt cutters were sympathetic to his politics, but this cannot have been their main reason for leaving the ATGWU and joining the NUTGW: the newly appointed ATGWU official with responsibility for the shirt industry, George Hamill, was also prominently associated with the IrLP. The evidence suggests that they were attracted by McGonagle's dynamism as a trade union leader, and by the fact that the NUTGW, now rebuilt, was a more appropriate union for them to join. Most of the Protestant shirt cutters were

Unionists, but their behaviour cannot be reduced to sectarianism either: in political or religious terms there was little to choose between George Hamill and Stephen McGonagle, both were anti-partitionists and both were Catholics. Moreover, the dockers in whom shirt cutters who were members of the ATGWU placed such faith were a mainly Catholic and strongly nationalist group of workers.

CHAPTER 6: THE SECESSION OF THE DERRY BRANCH OF THE NUTGW 1952-1954: TRADITIONAL IRISH MARXISM STOOD ON ITS HEAD

6.1 Introduction

The central thrust of the traditional Irish marxist view of trade unionism in Northern Ireland is that sectarian tension and conflict in the workplace - arising from competition over, and discrimination in, the allocation of jobs, and from ruling class manipulation - created problems for trade unionists seeking to unite Protestant and Catholic workers and thereby inhibited the development of the movement. According to my respondents, however, relations between Catholic and Protestant shirt workers were comparatively pacific during much of the inter-war period. To be sure, they noted that there could be tension at times of the year when historical events of significance to Protestants were celebrated, 12 July, 12 August, and 'poppy day', but none of my respondents recalled a single occasion when sectarian conflict interfered with trade union organisation: it was a problem which they associated with the 1950s. What they were referring to was a series of events which followed the secession of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in September 1952. The 'breakaway', as these events are collectively known locally, is obviously of considerable importance in relation to general theories of trade unionism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland; it will be the subject of this chapter.

Before I begin my analysis of the breakaway I want to present an outline of the sequence of events as reported in the local press. There are two reasons for doing this. First, it is a complicated story and a preliminary outline will aid clarity. Second, the breakaway was a very bitter experience for many of my respondents, it remains a controversial subject among them, and their recollections of it are coloured more than usual by hindsight; it is therefore useful to establish the sequence of events from the outset using more

dispassionate, contemporaneous sources. Local newspapers are the only such sources available''.

According to the newspapers, Stephen McGonagle and the Derry Branch Committee decided to resign from the NUTGW at a meeting on Monday 8 September 1952. These decisions were made public at a special meeting of the Branch as a whole on Thursday 11 September 1952. The newspaper reports do not give the number of shirt workers who attended the meeting, but my respondents suggest up to 400 women: significantly more than usually attended meetings of the Branch. The special meeting passed two unanimous motions: the first, proposed by a Miss Ruby O'Neill, was that the Branch resign en bloc, the second (the proposer is not recorded) advocated the establishment of an independent trade union. In another vote, the former Branch Committee and officers of the NUTGW were re-elected to serve the new trade union (DJ: 12 September 1952, and LS: 13 September 1952). At a 'mass meeting' the following week it was decided to name the new organisation the Clothing Workers' Union (CWU) and appoint McGonagle as its full-time secretary (DJ: 17 September 1952; LS: 16 September 1952). The new organisation was soon claiming that there had been a '100 per cent change over in membership' (DJ: 15 September 1952); 'it wasn't a split, it was a landslide' (LS: 20 September 1952). None of my respondents dispute the fact that all but 'a handful' of trade unionists left the NUTGW and joined the CWU. By the end of September McGonagle was claiming that the CWU had a membership of 3,000 (LS: 27 September 1952); in May 1953 the figure was put at nearly 3,500 (DJ: 27 May 1953 and LS: 28 May 1953). Early in 1953 the CWU employed a full-time official to assist McGonagle; his name was Seamus Quinn, a Derryman who prior to his appointment had been a clerk and an active trade unionist in the Northern Ireland Transport Board in Belfast.

At the time, the fundamental reason given by the Branch Committee for their resignation and for the establishment of an independent union was that they had no confidence in Macgougan because he had ignored their decisions both in relation to the payment of benefit to a group of workers involved in an industrial dispute and to the calculation of holiday payments, and because he had negotiated with employers without consulting the NUTGW Branch

Committee or the ATGWU (DJ: 12 and 15 September 1952; LS: 13 September 1952).

Derry Trades Council and the ITUC opposed the breakaway, and in May 1953 they initiated negotiations to reconcile the two organisations. The NUTGW negotiators did not include Macgougan: they were Harold Childs, a national official, and Paddy O'Connor, a Dublin clothing worker and member of the union's National Executive who had been sent to Derry as temporary Branch secretary following McGonagle's resignation. The negotiations broke-down in July when the NUTGW rejected McGonagle's conditions for reunification (DJ: 24 July 1953). They resumed, only to breakdown again in 15 October 1953. On this occasion McGonagle broke-off the negotiations claiming that the NUTGW had attempted to use the Derry Trades Council to ensure that the SMF would not recognise the CWU: (DJ 16 October 1953). On 20 October 1953, 4,300 members of the CWU were balloted on a proposal that they affiliate with the ITGWU; the result was 3,316 for affiliation, 216 against, 64 votes spoiled, and 461 ballot papers not returned (LS: 22 October 1953). The decision to ballot the members on affiliation with the ITGWU was presented as a defensive reaction to the collapse of the reconciliation talks with the NUTGW and the latter's efforts to ensure that the SMF did not recognise the CWU. However, given that there were only three days between the ending of negotiations and the ballot, the NUTGW claim that the CWU had been preparing to ballot its members prior - rather than in response - to the breakdown in negotiations is plausible (DJ: 19 October 1953).

Up to this point the opposition of the local labour movement to the breakaway had been muted and uneven, but condemnation of the decision to affiliate to the ITGWU was more general and revealed a sense of outrage: the Trades Council deplored it, and George Hamill of the ATGWU said that it threatened to split the trade union movement in the city (DJ: 28 October 1953). Some members of the ATGWU in the docks even threatened not to handle a consignment of shirts from a CWU/ITGWU organised factory which was awaiting shipment. The threat was not carried out because members of the ATGWU who worked as cutters in the factory concerned advised the

dockers that it would jeopardise an important order (DJ: 30 October 1953).

Press interest in the breakaway diminished after the ballot on affiliation to the ITGWU, and did not revive until April 1954 when members of the ITGWU struck against the employment of a member of the NUTGW in Harrison's shirt factory. However, it is possible to piece together what happened during the intervening period using respondents' recollections. Following the transfer of the CWU to the ITGWU a number of women left the latter and rejoined the NUTGW. In the month after the ballot these women came together with a number of women who had never defected to the ITGWU - no more than 150 in all - and, for the first time since the secession, reconstituted a functioning NUTGW Branch Committee in Derry (Minutes: 17 November 1953). During the winter of 1953/54 tension between the members of the NUTGW and ITGWU built up as O'Connor and Macgougan attempted to consolidate their base. The dispute in Harrison's was the climax of the whole episode: it lasted 17 days and was exceptionally bitter.

Several of the younger managers and political activists whom I spoke to in the course of my research - people who were too young to have had direct experience of the breakaway - tended to view the breakaway as a straight-forward sectarian dispute: the members of the NUTGW were Protestant, and the members of the ITGWU were Catholic. For example, for Eamonn McCann² told me that the breakaway was 'one of his earliest memories': his father, a member of the Trades Council at the time, was strongly opposed to the breakaway, and McCann remembered it being a topic for discussion in his house; he also remembered seeing women fighting in the street,

tearing each others' hair out. It was very unusual to see women brawling.

According to McCann, McGonagle had urged women to join 'the dockers union' which was just a 'code for Catholic, Irish trade union.' It is not difficult to understand why this view should be so prevalent: as we have seen, the ITGWU was first established by James Larkin in 1909 as a specifically Irish breakaway from the British based National Union of Dock Labourers; it subsequently became closely identified with the nationalist side in the Irish War of Independence; and in 1952, at the time of the Derry breakaway, it was

the dominant union in the Congress of Irish Unions (CIU) which had been set up in 1945 by the members of a number of Irish based unions who were opposed to British influence within the ITUC.

Trade unionists who had direct experience of the breakaway present a more complicated picture. Many of my sample of union activists and officials were involved in the breakaway on one side or the other, and, not surprisingly, their recollections of it differed in many respects. Nevertheless there were two aspects on which they all agreed: first, that the split between the NUTGW and the CWU/ITGWU had sectarian undertones, but, second, that the breakaway originated in a personality clash between Macgougan and McGonagle, and the latter was the driving force in the establishment of an independent union and in its transfer to the ITGWU. As I indicated in chapter four, my respondents' tendency to explain social and historical processes in terms of the personalities of the particular individuals who were involved in them is problematic from the point of view of social science: to accept it uncritically would be to run the risk of methodological individualism. Nevertheless, I am theoretically committed to an approach in which some priority is given to 'the actor's view', so I will begin my analysis of the breakaway, in section 6.2, with an examination of relations between Macgougan and McGonagle; I will, however, attempt to locate their personal relationship in the context of local politics and the internal government of the NUTGW. Of course, from a social scientific perspective it could be argued that irrespective of what my respondents say, and regardless of the role played by trade union leaders, the most important question is: what led women to support one or other side in the split? I will address this question in relation to the ITGWU in section 5.3, and in relation to the NUTGW in section 5.4. Section 5.5 will be concerned with the growing tension between the two unions and with the inter-union dispute in Harrison's factory. Throughout the chapter I will, of course, be particularly concerned to locate the causal significance of sectarianism as a factor in the breakaway. To this end I will seek to compare and elucidate the Derry breakaway with reference to analyses of union breakaways and intra-union conflict in other parts of Ireland and in Britain.

6.2 The Origins of the Breakaway: Personal Differences and Intra-Union Conflict

According to Lerner (1961: 187) trade union breakaways are manifestations of 'a breakdown in solidarity which occur when a section of the rank and file lose confidence in their union and develop different goals.' My respondents present a view of the Derry breakaway which contradicts this definition. According to them the Derry breakaway was instigated and led by the local official, Stephen McGonagle, not by the rank and file, and he embarked on this course of action because of a personality conflict with his superior, Jack Macgougan. As will become apparent, this view pervades my respondents' recollections; differences arise only as to the nature of the personality clash. Some - especially, but not exclusively, McGonagle's opponents - blame McGonagle's egotism or ambition; for example, George Hamill who knew Macgougan and McGonagle well but was more friendly with the latter, told me

I was very anti McGonagle breaking away... we'd daggers drawn McGonagle and I over the head of it and we didn't speak to one another and we were great friends before that and I told him he was absolutely wrong and I thought it was a pure bit of personalities and as well as that we were scared the Irish Transport [Union] would get in... It was Macgougan who appointed McGonagle in the job [of Derry Branch secretary of the NUTGW]... [they were] very close friends. It's a question of a wee bit of ego on McGonagle's part. McGonagle is very egotistical. He's a good friend of mine at the present time, always has been, but very much McGonagle. He liked the power, and I suppose something Macgougan was doing just took his toes [sic] and he says, 'he's not going to do it to me, and I'm going to be my own boss.'

Some, like Seamus Quinn, merely pointed out that both men were very ambitious. And others, mainly McGonagle's supporters, blamed Macgougan's style of leadership.

There is no doubt that McGonagle's relationship with Macgougan had deteriorated prior to the breakaway. McGonagle's resignation came as a total surprise to Macgougan, but in retrospect he was able to trace a deterioration in their relationship over a long period:

I picked up [on McGonagle's feelings], suppose it would have been 1950. We were involved in an election in the Republic supporting the public speakers. He hadn't a car at that time, I had, but he joined up with other people in a car and went to different meetings, and it came back to

me that he'd spent most of his time bemoaning the fact that he had to work for a character like me. [laughs]

But it got particularly bad in the period immediately before the break:

McGonagle had been ill, we [the union] gave him leave of absence - [He was] on the verge of a nervous breakdown - and when he came back every little complaint seemed to have been magnified in his mind. He couldn't see why Derry shouldn't be able to do its own thing... instead of being tied to what he called 'the London bandwagon.'

Their personal enmity comes through even in the press statements which they released at the time. McGonagle and his Branch Committee justified their resignations from the NUTGW in terms of their dissatisfaction with Macgougan's handling of two issues, one related to lock-out benefit, but the main one was to do with holiday pay. At first, Macgougan responded by arguing that his position on the holiday pay issue was the correct one: he claimed that the Derry recommendation on holiday pay was, in effect, the same as that put forward by the SMF; that McGonagle's advocacy of this recommendation had resulted in the employers' motion being carried at the Wages Council; and that it had resulted in anomalies which were detrimental to many workers (see 'Statement to Irish Branches and Shop Stewards' 12 September 1952). Even today Macgougan remains indignant about the holiday pay issue. However, in successive statements to the press, McGonagle made it clear that holiday pay as such was not the issue, it was Macgougan's style of leadership: his failure to take account of the Branch's recommendation on the matter, and the fact that he had negotiated with employers without consulting NUTGW members in Derry (DJ: 15 September 1952). In a later statement Macgougan rehearsed the reasons which McGonagle had given for his action and concluded that,

the real reason is the personal ambition of a man [McGonagle] who dislikes authority and discipline and is misusing the loyalty of scores of sincere and well meaning trade unionists. (Press Statement 24 September 1952).

In line with my respondents' recollections, I found no evidence of mass disaffection with the NUTGW prior to the breakaway. Indeed, as will become apparent the secession came 'out of the blue' both to ordinary NUTGW members in Derry, and to the office staff in the Belfast headquarters of the union. McGonagle himself told me that

Derry members of the NUTGW 'resented nothing about the Garment Workers' Union, it was a good union: they followed me because of my personality.'

Neither is there any doubt that McGonagle was the instigator and driving force behind the breakaway. However, the breakaway cannot be explained simply as the result of a personality clash: McGonagle acted in concert with the members of the Derry Branch Committee of the NUTGW and only after he had secured their support. Miss Cosgrave, one of the two surviving members of the secessionary Branch Committee (the other was old and infirm at the time of my research and declined to be interviewed), told me that 'we knew it [the breakaway] was on the cards for a long time.' Even before the breakaway was announced, members of the Branch Committee had rented and prepared offices for the new union.

What, then, was the basis for the alliance between McGonagle and the activists? Given the subsequent turn of events the first possibility which must be considered is politics and/or religion. Those of my respondents who remained loyal to the NUTGW claimed that, in addition to McGonagle's personal motives, the breakaway was inspired by Irish nationalism - a desire to establish an Irish based union. Macgougan 'didn't know' whether or not McGonagle was motivated by nationalism, but he told me that,

I do know that he carried out a whispering campaign that Catholic workers should have an Irish union, and then he went on about a general secretary who'd lived with a man who was not her husband... Anna Loughlin was general secretary [of the NUTGW] at the time.

As we saw in section 4.4, it is true that McGonagle and most, if not all, of the secessionary Branch Committee were Catholics, and that Macgougan was from a Protestant background. It is also true that McGonagle and several prominent members of the Committee, Patrick Hamill, Lawrence Hegarty, and Barney Donaghey, were members of the anti-partitionist IrLP. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that the conflict between McGonagle and the Derry Branch Committee on the one hand and Macgougan on the other was not based on religious or political differences. As I pointed out in section 2.2, the keynote of McGonagle's successive electoral challenges to the Nationalist Party in Derry was that by constantly stressing the evil of partition

they alienated Protestants, and, as we shall see, McGonagle and other members of the secessionary Branch Committee went out of their way to allay Protestant suspicions about the breakaway. Moreover, at the time of the breakaway Macgougan was also a member of the IrLP. In fact, it was through their close political affinity that Macgougan and McGonagle first met and became friends. McGonagle, as I have already pointed out, joined the NILP in 1946; Macgougan was the Party chairman in that year. According to Macgougan, It was precisely as a result of their political agreement that McGonagle was appointed secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in 1947:

I sponsored him, [otherwise] he wouldn't have got it [the job]: I had the right of veto... I coached McGonagle in advance about how the Trade Board worked, [and] how the wage pattern took place - he'd his answers all off pat.

Both Macgougan and McGonagle believed in a united Ireland and they adopted the same position in the argument which developed between anti-partitionist and pro-Union elements within the NILP in 1948-1949 (see section 2.2). Macgougan was expelled from the Party in 1948, and McGonagle left soon after. Both men were prominently involved in the extension of IrLP organisation to Northern Ireland. The role of politics in Macgougan's and McGonagle's relationship and in the breakaway is summed up well by George Hamill:

He [McGonagle] wasn't inhibited in the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union with regard to that [politics]: Macgougan was just as nationalist as he was, sure he stood as a socialist republican in Belfast. There was no political differences between Macgougan and McGonagle. That was one of the reasons Macgougan put him in the job [as secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW] at first: because they seen eye-to-eye. McGonagle was not a member of the union at the time and that caused a lot of bother: the job was advertised, there was another candidate who took great exception to it - James [it was actually Jack] Doherty - he was a member of the Garment Workers' [Union], a tailor. He took umbrage at McGonagle being appointed... Macgougan and McGonagle had relations in earlier days through the Labour Party: Macgougan came up and helped at elections in Derry. It was a good appointment, Macgougan saw that Derry had the potential for a full-time official - no, I think it [the breakaway] was purely personal.

If not politics or religion, what did form the basis of the opposition to Macgougan? It was a shared feeling that Macgougan was limiting McGonagle's and the Branch Committee's say in decisions about matters affecting local shirt workers. Miss Cosgrave told me:

I felt at the time that Jack McGuigan [sic], Macgougan, whatever you call him, was tying down Stephen [McGonagle] too much, wasn't giving him enough lee way. Now Jack McGuigan and what do you call the other fella [she is referring to Armstrong an official in the Belfast Branch of the NUTGW] - there was a girl across the street [Julia Kelly, another member of the secessionary Branch Committeel and we were going to a meeting this night - Jack McGuigan and the other fella came there [ie to the street] to persuade us not to leave their union. We talked out there for a long time, we'd long discussions, but we had our minds made up because we knew what Stephen was, we knew he was an honest person and he always preached, he always let you know, you had to be honest with your employer as well as yourself... he told you what you were entitled to and he told you what you had to do if you wanted that: you had to work for it. He was very honest, there was never nothing underhand he never said to you, 'oh, we'll get this boy,' or, 'we'll get this off him.' No, he was straight down the line... Macgougan was letting everybody know that he was the boss... Jack McGuigan, Macgougan, was limiting Stephen's workings in the union. Thats the way we felt.

I have referred more than once to a previous occasion when the Branch Committee had questioned Macgougan's authority; ironically it concerned McGonagle's appointment. As we have seen, the opposition to McGonagle's appointment developed because one of the Branch Committee members, Jack Doherty, coveted the job. But Doherty was not alone in suggesting that the position should have been be filled by an election within the local Branch rather than by appointment because allowing Macgougan to make the appointment gave him too much say in the matter. And it is significant that, at the time, several disaffected members of the Branch Committee - notably Patrick Hamill who was to become a prominent supporter of the 1952 breakaway - discussed the possibility of setting up a breakaway union.

There is some evidence to support the suggestion that Macgougan's style of leadership had an authoritarian character. For example, when criticised over his handling of the holiday pay issue, he justified his action - that is, his attempt to re-negotiate with the employers without consulting the Derry Branch - in terms of his seniority in the Union hierarchy:

The national union has democratic machinery, the branch committee and appointed official are responsible for protecting the interests of the members at local level and conclude agreements with employers. When it comes to dealing with matters on a broader field then the decisions are a matter for the Irish committee and negotiations covering the whole of Northern Ireland are a matter for the

Irish Officer [himself] who is responsible to the Irish committee and to the Executive of the union. (Press Statement 24 September 1952),

Moreover, when I asked him about how he saw his role as Irish regional organiser of the NUTGW, he told me, 'I was always a great believer in establishing a chain of command.' Macgougan also told me that in the period before the breakaway he had felt it necessary to assert his authority over McGonagle on a number of occasions:

He [McGonagle] was jumpy... [it was] frustration, [as] somebody said: 'you can't have two cocks in the one barn-yard'... [but] I was the boss, it was as simple as that. He would question every directive and he would go to his Branch Committee: no problem, resolution against Belfast interference... that was going on for sometime [prior to the breakaway]... McGonagle had a lot of stooges about him.

In short, the breakaway originated in an intra-union power struggle. Amongst scholars of industrial relations such conflicts are widely recognised as an integral part of union government in Britain (see Lerner, 1961; James 1984; and Hemingway 1978). The orthodox view is that the source of intra-union conflict is an inherent tension between the democratic ideal (that is, control by ordinary members) and a tendency to oligarchy (that is, control by officials) which results from the need for organisational and administrative efficiency. This view was first developed by the Webbs (1902) and Michels (1958), and is evidently the one which Lerner had in mind. As I pointed out at the outset of this section, the Derry case does not conform to this view; James, however, has developed a model which seems more appropriate. In James' model the opposition between 'democracy' and 'oligarchy' or 'representation' and 'administrative efficiency' is replaced by the notion of trade unions as polyarchies wherein conflict over decision-making is not always between leaders/ bureaucrats and the rank and file, but can, and frequently does, occur at many levels within trade unions:

'representation' and 'administration' need not be conflicting objectives. For administration to be effective a high level of participation is required since unions rely heavily on the contributions of unpaid helpers. These activists, who become shop stewards and sit on the district committees, the divisional committee, and the national committee, expect that their participation will be rewarded by a share in the decision-making process of the union. It is not surprising, therefore, that activists at all levels will seek to maximise their share in the decision-making, and that this leads to the conflicts which have been

described as characteristic of trade union governments.
(1984: 113)

James does not regard the rank and file as irrelevant: rather, they can act as the 'arbiters of legitimacy since their behaviour will indicate support for one or other collectivity' (1984: 16). In the Derry case, the rank and file arbitrated in favour of the breakaway by joining it in large numbers. In the next section I will examine why.

6.3 The Breakaway and the Rank and File

Although there was no sign of rank and file disaffection with the NUTGW prior to the resignation of the Derry Branch Committee, women shirtmakers appear to have responded to secessionary group with enthusiasm. For instance, Miss Cosgrave contrasted the routine attendance at general meetings of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW with the much larger attendance at meetings of the CWU: the former attracted,

over a hundred, maybe about a hundred and fifty... [but] at the time that Stephen was, at the breakaway, it was a hall Stephen had to take... because there was three or four hundred at those meetings.

Moreover, as we have seen, membership of the CWU increased from approximately 3,000 in September 1952 to more than 4,000 in October 1953. There is no doubt that the breakaway was popular, and in this section I will use my respondents' recollections and experiences to construct an account of how, on the one hand, the leaders of the breakaway appealed to the shirt workers, and why, on the other hand, shirt workers found it so appealing. However, to put this popularity into perspective it is worth making one point about the practicalities of the situation. Initially, the announcement of the breakaway created a considerable amount of confusion amongst trade unionists. In this situation the fact that all the activists supported the breakaway was crucial. After all, these were the people who - in the days before the 'check-off' system - collected, or organised the collection of, union dues, and when they stopped collecting for the NUTGW and switched to the CWU the former effectively ceased to function as an organisation. Indeed, for Miss

Gallagher, who later became the mainstay of the NUTGW in Derry, the secession and the new union was a fait accompli to which there seemed little alternative:

I was just standing doing my work and one or two of Stephen's crowd, they were kind of militant, they said, 'don't be paying any union on Friday night until you're told,' then somebody said, 'why?' and they said, 'Stephen's starting his own union.' They thought it was Stephen's union and that's the first I heard of it... and that's what girls were: they weren't well versed, they didn't know, they just knew they were going to follow Stephen McGonagle. They didn't go into details. We were sort of left high and dry and we didn't know what to do. I remember the brother sending word to stay put [ie remain in the NUTGW], so we went down to union [ie NUTGW] one day in our lunch hour and they told us straight [ie the right way of things]. But it was like a dead end, there was nobody about, Macgougan wasn't to be had.

How did my respondents explain the success of the breakaway in attracting rank and file members of the NUTGW? Again, they tended to attribute it to McGonagle: his record as a trade union official, his skills as a communicator, and his general popularity. In Miss Cosgrave's opinion the ordinary members supported McGonagle because,

Well, you know he held the general meetings which were very seldom heard of, I never heard of them anyway [ie before McGonagle became an official], and he explained a lot of things to them and anybody that went to him he was very helpful and did all he could for them... he let them know what was going on in the union and what the union was doing and how the union stood, so I think that would be the reason [why most of the women supported the breakaway].

Miss McMorris was an ordinary union member at the time of the breakaway (she did not become a shop steward until the late 1950s); she told me that she and her work mates joined the CWU:

Because it was Stephen... Stephen was always a very successful man, very forceful personality. He was that type: a great jovial type of man and made friends with everybody and ha ha'd and all that. I would say that it was due in good part to his personality. Because a lot of them [her work mates] - maybe I'm saying it but... I know I got on with him really well... he was talented and clever and I wasn't: [in later years] I sat on Wages Council with him and all these... Queen's Counsels, Stephen had it [his negotiating position] made up in his head, no pen or nothing and he was very forceful. So I admired that, all that was lacking [in me]... I secretly admired the man for his brains.

When talking about McGonagle's popularity, several of my respondents

alluded to his physical attractiveness. I asked Mrs McMenamin, an ITGWU activist to whom I was introduced during my research³, why most of the factory women supported the breakaway; she replied with a laugh, 'oh, all the women went for Stevie.' When showing me a photograph of the Branch Committee of the CWU, Miss Cosgrave pointed out McGonagle's 'handsomeness.' And Miss McMorris compared him to Elvis Presley:

As one manager says to me 'youse are all' - well he didn't say Elvis Presley, but like we were looking on him like that, because he was the champion of the factory girls. We didn't see no wrong in him then, maybe in later years when the 11-plus came in! [laughs].

In the light of my respondents' emphasis on personality it is worth noting that Macgougan, though priding himself on his working class origins and interests, did not consider himself to be good at communicating with ordinary trade unionists. He contrasted himself with another local full-time officer of the NUTGW, Billy Lindsay, in the following way:

he [Billy Lindsay] was very good at plant level negotiations and explaining things to people that wasn't terribly literate, and I wasn't. One of my weaknesses was that my vocabulary was too extensive for speaking at the level you need to. As Francis Maguire [NUTGW activist in Belfast, later the first women's officer of the NUTGW] said, 'the first time I went to hear you and you talked about, "processing it through the negotiating machinery," I wondered what the hell you were talking about!' [Laughs]

Certainly, Macgougan's attempts to rally support for the NUTGW in the autumn of 1952 - by speaking to individual activists such as Miss Cosgrave, and by addressing workers as they left factories and at a public meeting (see LS: 25 September 1952) - were unsuccessful.

However, the success of the breakaway and the collapse of the NUTGW cannot be explained in terms of the contrasting personalities and abilities of McGonagle and Macgougan. Rather, the popularity of McGonagle and of the breakaway which he instigated and the corresponding failure of Macgougan to rally support for the NUTGW can only be understood when set against the background of the intense local solidarity and pride which was, and is, characteristic of Derry society. This localism was based on shared hardship and poverty and was linked to a feeling that the city had been systematically

neglected by the Belfast based Stormont regime. Seamus Quinn told me that, 'indeed,' Derry,

has [a strong local solidarity], but of course that's [a result of] the attitude that Northern Ireland ends at Glengormley [a suburb of Belfast].

George Hamill summed up the feeling behind Derry localism in the following way:

Belfast as a city hadn't been popular. Belfast people look on us as a country village. The bulk of people in Derry are oriented to Donegal, very few people have any affinity with County Derry.... [and] there was a bitterness about the concentration of new jobs and the number of [industrial] sites established in Belfast.

Having been born and brought up in Derry, McGonagle was known to many shirt workers not just as a union official but as a neighbour, as a family friend, and as a member of the same community. McGonagle came from the Brandywell area, and at the time of the breakaway lived in Marlborough Road. The former is adjacent to the Bogside; the latter is situated between the Bogside, the Creggan, and Rosemount - these were areas where a large proportion of the shirt workforce lived. Miss Cosgrave had no affinity with Macgougan, as we have seen, she could barely remember his name, but McGonagle was the man 'there on the spot... we knew what Stephen was, we knew he was an honest person.' Miss McMorris drew attention to the importance of the fact that McGonagle was a neighbour in a more pointed way:

He [McGonagle] only lived around the corner from me, he was an older man, a family man [I knew him] as a neighbour, as a man, as an official... he would have called 'hallo' to me and I would have just said 'hallo,' never would have called him 'Stephen' as I did later... union-wise he was very good at figures and his mind... I remember business men coming out after him [and] trying to be all wily, wily, oily, wily after he'd floored them and that made you sicker of management. I felt great that we had this great bulk of a person, like, could speak. If he had have been weak it would have been devastating, to me anyway.

McGonagle himself told me about his roots in a terraced house in the Brandywell, emphasised the importance of community life and mutual support in Derry in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and contrasted it with the lack of community feeling in the quiet residential street of detached bungalows where he now lives.

Perhaps more importantly, McGonagle and the other CWU spokesmen⁴ presented the breakaway in terms which both expressed and appealed to Derry localism. Thus, a frequent theme of CWU spokesmen was that Derry shirt workers were better organised and had negotiated better agreements with local employers than clothing workers in Belfast, the rest of Northern Ireland, or the United Kingdom; that Macgougan and the NUTGW general secretary were 'trying to limit Derry workers' claims to the lower levels attained in the UK'; and that 'six county workers ⁵' are being denied the right to negotiate with their employers' (DJ: 12 September 1952). The high levels of union organisation in Derry were contrasted with poor organisation among clothing workers elsewhere on at least two occasions: for example, in reply to Macgougan's defence of the NUTGW in the local press, Lawrence Hegarty, the secretary of the secessionary Branch, claimed that only 15.5% of British clothing workers, and 10 to 12% of Belfast clothing workers, were organised (DJ: 15 September 1952)¹; at a meeting in January 1953 it was alleged that the NUTGW had failed to organise in the rest of Ireland (LS: 6 January 1953). And, in September 1952 McGonagle told a meeting of shirt workers that,

negotiations carried on in Derry in the last five or six years had affected the whole industry in Ireland and Britain [probably a reference to work study negotiations]. The agreements arrived at, while not what we really want, are so much ahead that they have been used outside the city. It is regrettable that they have not been used to far greater effect in such a way that would consolidate your position. (LS: 27 September 1952).

Faced by this localism, Macgougan and the trade union activists whom he brought from Belfast and other parts of Ireland to support the Derry Branch of the NUTGW were unable to make much headway. At one NUTGW organised public meeting Paddy O'Connor - the Dublin based NUTGW activist drafted to Derry to act as temporary Branch secretary in the immediate aftermath of the breakaway - made a reference to McGonagle having been well paid by the NUTGW; his speech was interrupted by a female heckler who objected to him 'maligning a Derryman' (DJ: 26 September 1952). At a later meeting organised by the NUTGW and the ITUC in an effort to promote reunification, an unnamed member of Belfast Trades Council drew a comparison between the NUTGW/CWU division and the inter-union dispute which had

allegedly caused the closure of Watt's distillery in 1921 (see section 3.4); one of McGonagle's supporters replied, 'Can you show us any break in trade union solidarity that led to the closing of the shipyard or the present unemployment in Derry.' The reference to the shipyard is particularly interesting: a common complaint among the older generation in Derry was that the local shipyard, which had employed 2,000 men in 1919 (DS: 21 February 1919), had been allowed to close in the mid 1920s while Belfast shipyard was kept going (see also Nash, 1974). At the same meeting Lawrence Hegarty added that, 'it is not necessary that people from outside Derry should speak here.' (DJ: 6 January 1953)⁶. Francis Maguire, then an activist in the Belfast Branch of the NUTGW remembers this incident⁷:

We took McGonagle apart, but a cutter shouted at me: 'You're not a Derry girl!' I shouted back, 'No, but I'm a garment worker!'

She too thought that 'Derry parochialism' was an important factor in support for the breakaway; she told me that because of neglect by the Stormont regime 'Derry sort of crawled into itself.'

Macgougan certainly felt that he was up against a strong local feeling: he told me that when he spoke to former NUTGW activists who had joined the CWU he got,

an extraordinary response: most of them said, 'well I would say to Stevie, "don't do it Stevie," but this is a Derry issue; we can't let the others down.' This was repeated over half a dozen of them at different times... there's always been an anti-Belfast complexion in Derry.

Quinn agreed that support for the breakaway was based on localism, but denied that the NUTGW suffered from anti-Belfast feeling:

No, I don't think there was any of that [anti-Belfast feeling], but certainly there was an appeal to local solidarity and that Derry was getting something that, you know what I mean, that it hadn't had before.

However, it is worth repeating (see above) that Quinn himself located the roots of Derry localism in 'the attitude that Northern Ireland ends at Glengormley [a suburb of Belfast].'

Undoubtedly, the localism to which McGonagle and the breakaway union appealed was felt most strongly within Derry's Catholic community, and was implicitly anti-Unionist; nevertheless, neither McGonagle nor any of his supporters sought to justify their actions -

at least not in public - in explicitly nationalist terms. Quinn told me:

There was no appeal to nationalism as such, but there was emphasis on the fact that this, the Clothing Workers' Union, albeit was only a beginning, it was an Irish union and that money wasn't going across to England... but there was no distinct appeal to nationalism.

The significance of this distinction can, perhaps, best be highlighted by means of an historical precedent. The ITGWU was first established by James Larkin as a breakaway from the British based National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) in the winter of 1908-1909; Gray (1984: 193-194) describes Larkin's tactics in the following way:

Just as Larkin had made masterful use of populist rhetoric as a means to organisation in the Protestant Belfast of 1907, so too it was in the practical interests of his new union, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, founded on 28 December 1908, that he now spoke with a distinctively Irish flavour. This in turn was reflected in the first rule book of the new organisation where Larkin asked rhetorically, 'Are we going to continue the policy of grafting ourselves on the English Trade Union movement, losing our own identity as a nation in the great world of organised labour?' and replied to his own question, 'We say, emphatically, no. Ireland has politically reached her manhood.'

In contrast, although the leaders of the Derry breakaway criticised the NUTGW as an English union, it was the interests of Derry or Northern Irish - never Irish workers - that it was said to have ignored.

Although the leaders of the breakaway did not seek to mobilise support by a direct appeal to nationalist sentiment, their identification with anti-partitionism was important in winning the support of some women. For example, Miss McMorris's father's opinion was an important factor in her decision to join the breakaway, and the fact that McGonagle was an anti-partitionist seems to have been important to him. Thus, she told me that while she supported the breakaway,

Just because it was Stephen, oh aye because it was him. But my father had a great influence on me: a fear again, not that - he was a good father, very loving father, [but] men in those days didn't show there affection very much. But he would have - because Sephen McGonagle was a union man and he a union man himself - [said] it was alright... he was always labour, but like as long as Ireland was divided he wouldn't vote labour, only if Ireland was one he would only vote labour. He was a strong labour man as well

as nationally minded... and the fact is if I had voted on somebody else [other than a nationalist], it all depended because he was a strong union minded man: he didn't mind, you know, me [being interested in the union]... because being a worker himself; he'd a forceful personality Stephen.

In this context, the absence of nationalist rhetoric may appear puzzling, but the explanation is simple: most of the Protestant workers who had joined the NUTGW in the late 1940s followed their Catholic colleagues into the CWU, and the leaders of the breakaway did not wish to alienate them. McGonagle professed to me his concern that the breakaway was untainted by sectarianism and claimed to have organised in 'Protestant factories'. But we do not have to take his word for it: there is ample evidence that the leaders of the breakaway took steps to head-off any incipient Protestant suspicions. For example, an attempt was made to make the leadership of the breakaway more balanced: the job of deputy organiser of the CWU was first offered to a local Protestant socialist who had no connection with the shirt industry. This man is now dead, but he was Mr Matthews' brother. Mr Matthews described McGonagle's approach to his brother in the following way:

That was a nice move too. Fred [a pseudonym for his brother] came over to me... says to me 'you know who called with me the other day?' Says I, 'Stephen McGonagle.' Says he, 'how did you know?' Says I, 'George Hamill mentioned to me about a fortnight ago that my brother Fred be asked to be second in command [of the CWU].' That was quite a clever move, because he knew Fred was a popular kind of guy... to get back to labels again, Stephen was a Roman Catholic, and Fred was a Protestant, and that would give the thing [the breakaway] a respectable veneer.

Fred refused McGonagle's approach because he regarded it as 'opportunistic' and because he shared his brother's view of the breakaway:

I always blamed McGonagle, McGonagle was looking to make a job for himself... but we'd [Fred and himself] never a real disagreement with him, everything was done in a gentlemanly way as far as we were concerned. But we knew in our own heart and soul [that] he [McGonagle] was doing wrong... Fred and I always looked on Steve, once he joined the [Londonderry] Labour Party [of which Mr Matthews was secretary, and in which Fred was a prominent activist] as a smart guy.

After Fred Matthews turned down the job it was advertised in the press; Quinn applied and got it.

A concern not to alienate Protestant shirt workers is also evident in the process whereby the CWU merged with the ITGWU, a union which because of its historical identification with Irish nationalism might have been expected to be unacceptable to many Protestant workers. Nowadays, McGonagle is not averse to giving the impression that he led Derry shirt workers into the ITGWU because he had long admired its 'history', and because he identified with its founder, James Larkin. For example, he told me that women workers were even more active in the ITGWU than they had been in the NUTGW because: 'the Irish content improved it, Ireland's Ireland: why should we have some Liverpool fella [sic], telling us what to do.' This quote is interesting because of the reference to 'some Liverpool fella'. James Larkin established the ITGWU following a series of conflicts with James Sexton the Liverpool based leader of the NUDL; the NUTGW had never been based in Liverpool. Notwithstanding these allusions, it is clear, first, that it was circumstances - not politics - which led McGonagle and Quinn to seek affiliation to an established union; second, that the ITGWU was not their first choice; and third, that when the members of the CWU were balloted on affiliation to the ITGWU, an effort was made to play-down the fact that the Transport and General Workers' Union on the ballot paper was the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. I will consider each of these points in turn.

Miss Cosgrave told me that the decision to approach an established union 'was well discussed, every aspect of it was discussed, we had meetings nearly every night in the week at that time', and that the reasons behind the decision were pragmatic rather than political: 'I don't think we could have carried on a terrible long time without the backing of a big union.' Macgougan claimed that the CWU had financial difficulties, but according to Quinn lack of money was not an immediate problem:

financially we were in a sound position: locally we had no big financial commitments, naturally being a local union. No, it wasn't financial reasons, but, of course if there'd been strikes or anything against us then we would have been in trouble.

So far as Quinn was concerned, the CWU needed 'the backing' of an established union

because [the Amalgamated] Transport and General Workers'

Union and the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] and all that were all getting lined up against us, and they were proposing to put embargoes. Although it was a bit silly [of] the Transport and General Workers' Union: they felt they could stop everything by stopping the docks which was a lot of nonsense as has been proved later. But... we felt we'd need to have some protection.

Macgougan was adamant that McGonagle and Quinn had approached, and been refused by, the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI) and the British based ATGWU prior to merging with the ITGWU. The WUI had been established in 1924 by James Larkin following an argument within the ITGWU; the leaders of the ITGWU prevented the WUI from affiliating to the ITUC, but in 1944, when the former left the ITUC and formed the CIU, the latter was invited to join the ITUC. In 1953 the WUI was led by James Larkin's son. Larkin junior was, in Macgougan's words, 'a good friend of mine: he told McGonagle to bugger-off.' Macgougan also told me, 'There's no doubt that McGonagle approached the ATGWU, 'because Norman Kennedy and John Deacon,' ATGWU officials, 'went to see John Newton,' general secretary of the NUTGW, and promised that if they accepted the CWU they would 'return the Derry membership [to the NUTGW] when things had calmed down; of course this would never have happened.' The NUTGW refused the ATGWU proposal and the ATGWU rebuffed McGonagle. Quinn admitted that he and McGonagle had approached the WUI, but claimed that it was the ATGWU which

approached us [the CWU]... to take us in... we hadn't exactly turned them down... it was Gilbert Lynch, and I think Ryan was the Belfast official [of the ATGWU]... they approached us, but we had some reservations about their good intentions, and then the local officials were behaving quite the opposite of what they had been suggesting.

I do not intend to arbitrate between these two different accounts - they are probably both quite accurate accounts of the same process seen from different perspectives; for my purposes the essential point is that McGonagle and Quinn considered the WUI and the ATGWU before deciding to seek amalgamation with the ITGWU. But it is also worth noting that, in an institutional sense, it was much less problematic for the CWU to amalgamate with the ITGWU than it would have been to amalgamate with either the WUI or the ATGWU: these two unions were affiliated to the same trade union congress as the NUTGW (the ITUC), and were therefore honour-bound to seek NUTGW agreement before

accepting its former members; the ITGWU, as an affiliate of the CIU, was not.

Such was the confusion about which Transport and General Workers' Union - the Irish or the British - the amalgamation ballot was about that a person calling himself 'Derry Docker' wrote to the Derry Journal in an effort 'to dispel the rumour' that the CWU was intending to transfer to the dockers' union, the ATGWU, and to distinguish it from the ITGWU (DJ: 19 October 1953). Moreover, according to Mr Matthews,

When the original pamphlets [I think he means ballot papers, but either way the point is the same] were put around Bryce and Weston's factory [Bryce and Weston's had closed by 1954, but after the closure Matthews worked in a factory set up by Fred Bryce; see Appendix 1] the word 'Irish' wasn't mentioned on the pamphlets at all. When I read it I couldn't understand it because the first person I contacted was George Hamill. George says, 'there's going to be a quare dust-up about this,' he says, 'they're not joining the Transport and General [Workers' Union], they're joining the Irish [Transport and General Workers' Union]. 'But,' says I, 'the majority of the girls don't even know that.' Ach... the thing was kept under cover 'till he [McGonagle] got them to sign their names. The average girl wasn't interested, if she thought she was in a stronger union, if she thought by joining this union that they would have had a more effective platform to fight for an increase in wages, because the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union was pretty hopeless.

It was only after the merger of the CWU and the ITGWU at the end of October 1953 that trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry began to assume what might be described as sectarian structure. According to Quinn the 'Unionists originally voted for the merger... but about a week afterwards [they] began to withdraw and we lost about 1,000 members.' Four weeks after the merger, on 17 November 1953, the NUTGW held a Branch Committee meeting in Derry for the first time since the breakaway began. The new Branch was composed of a few women who, like Miss Gallagher, had never deserted the NUTGW, and larger number of women who had defected from the ITGWU; by all accounts, they numbered not much more than 150 in all, and most were Protestants. Quinn's estimate of the number of Unionist women who left the breakaway following the merger is probably excessive, but it is clear that few Protestants went into the ITGWU. Moreover, it

would seem that once the CWU had become part of the ITGWU, it began to attract support on a more explicitly political basis. George Hamill recalled:

The Trades Council called a meeting in our place [the ATGWU offices] and I was one of the speakers condemning the Irish Transport for coming in and taking these members that belonged to the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union... McGonagle had a couple of boys taking notes at the meeting of what we were saying: a wee chap called McLaughlin - who was a great supporter - McLaughlin and some of them supported the Irish Transport more on a political line than a trade union line... He [McLaughlin] was a butcher as a matter of fact, [a] great friend of Stephen. And Stephen was standing up the street when we were having the meeting and McLaughlin was coming out and giving him all who was speaking and all like that. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether it was at the first or second meeting, I told him [laughs] - I put McLaughlin out of the meeting altogether - I says, 'we'll have none of McGonagle's spies in here' and they resented it very much: maybe I acted a wee bit high handed.

6.4 The Reconstitution of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW

Miss Cosgrave regarded the defection of Protestant shirt workers from the ITGWU back to the NUTGW as irrational sectarianism. She told me:

To me, that was a religious thing. But, now, that Committee [the secessionary Committee which established the CWU] is very mixed [in its religious composition] and they stood loyal by him [McGonagle], but the like of McCarthy's and some of the smaller factories [did not]. To me it was because - I'm being honest, this is my way of thinking - that it was because Irish was mentioned and we were breaking away from a British trade union. There was nothing political or nothing... religion or politics was never discussed were Stephen McGonagle was concerned - what he was, what he thought, he kept to himself. He was only a man for the worker. But at the time... I never discussed it with anybody, but I had to be honest with myself when I looked around me and heard the way, what they did, in McCarthy's, [there] was only one thing for it: it was just religion. McCarthy's and there was another factory on the Waterside - [the Ebrington]. They let it be known [that] they didn't want into an Irish union. It was stupid, I thought they were stupid: it was in their own interest. It [affiliating to an Irish union] was nothing political or anything else... as I said to you before Stephen was tied down by your man [Macgougan].

It is true that most of the 150 or so members of the NUTGW Branch which was re-established following the CWU's merger with the ITGWU were Protestants, but my research contradicts the picture suggested by Miss Cosgrave in two important respects. First, the new NUTGW Branch Committee was more broadly based and more heterogeneous than Miss Cosgrave would allow. Second, the actions and intentions of those women who helped to re-establish the NUTGW in Derry cannot be reduced to sectarianism. These two assertions are based on material derived from the minutes of the new Branch Committee, and on the experiences and recollections of Macgougan, Miss Gallagher, and Mrs Henderson. Miss Gallagher was the founding 'chairman' or 'president' of the new Branch; Mrs Henderson joined the Branch Committee in the mid 1950s and was elected 'chairman' in March 1960. Neither woman is typical of women who joined the NUTGW during the period under consideration: they were the two most enthusiastic and consistent activists. But, precisely because of their close and long-standing involvement in the union, they are well placed to talk with authority not only about their own actions, but about the behaviour and identities of other members of the union. Moreover, when this research was carried out the other members of the new NUTGW Branch Committee were either dead, had emigrated, could not be traced, or were unwilling to be interviewed. I will begin by examining the religious affiliations of the Committee members.

The Derry Branch Committee of the NUTGW formed in November 1953 was composed of one representative from each of 13 of the approximately 30 factories then in production. These factories were as follows: Harrison's; Wilkinson's; Rosemount; the City (McIntyre, Hogg, and Marsh); the Ebrington; Tillie and Henderson's; Neely and Wilkinson's; Kennedy's; Hamilton's, Richard's, McCarthy's, McArthur and Beattie's, and Moore's (Minutes: 17 November 1953). Seven of the 13 women were Catholics, and five, possibly six, were Protestants (Miss Gallagher remembered the religious affiliations of all but one Committee member). It is true that this Committee attracted greater Protestant involvement than any previous NUTGW Branch Committee; however, contrary to what Miss Cosgrave suggests, it included representatives from a wider range of factories than just McCarthy's and the Ebrington, and the majority of Committee members were, in

fact, Catholic. Moreover, the Branch 'chairman,' Miss Gallagher and the acting full-time Branch secretary, Paddy O'Connor, were Catholics.

I now want to consider the reasons why these women choose to become active in the NUTGW rather than the ITGWU. First, however, it is necessary to examine the nature of the choice. The new NUTGW Branch Committee did not emerge spontaneously: Macgougan, O'Connor, and Miss Gallagher had, as we have seen, been attempting to rally support for the NUTGW in Derry since the breakaway began. Macgougan is convincing in his assertion that they did not attempt to play on the religious or political sentiments of Protestant workers: that 'would have contradicted all the policies I stood for - a socialist that believed in the ultimate unity of Ireland.' However, there was a stress on the argument that, because of the structural position of the Derry shirt industry - that is, the fact that most workers were employed in factories which were branch plants of British firms which exported to British markets - and because of the wage bargaining system whereby local managers did not concede wage increases in advance of negotiations in Britain, the NUTGW, as a British based union, was best placed to represent the interests of Derry shirt workers. For example, Miss Gallagher told me:

I always put up just the argument that we were a British based union and our negotiations were across the water with the employers that mattered... we got the increases across the water that automatically came to us and that was why we did the negotiations - it wasn't the Irish Transport [Union]. That was our first argument that I put up, because to give them to understand that we were the union that really got them the increases. (see also Macgougan's Press statement 24 September 1952, and DJ: 9 December 1953)

Thus, the choice for women who worked in the Derry shirt industry was between two unions which were defined as 'British' and 'Irish'; two unions between which, as will become apparent in the next section, relations had become mutually antagonistic.

Given the nature of the choice, it is quite remarkable that most members of the NUTGW Branch Committee were Catholics, particularly since several of them came from strongly nationalist backgrounds. Why did these women support the NUTGW rather than the ITGWU? In at least three cases, the crucial factor seems to have been the influence of

fathers who were themselves trade union activists. A family connection with the ATGWU seems to have been particularly important; this is not surprising because, as I have already shown, although some ATGWU members in the docks were sympathetic to the ITGWU many were strongly opposed^(*). According to Miss Gallagher,

Margaret McGeady, her father was a docker [he] was a great trade unionist, she worked in Tillie and Henderson... Meta O'Doherty, her father was a big man in the union, in the dockers' [union]... I think too their fathers had an influence because he was attached to Orchard street [the ATGWU office] in some way or another... Selly's [McDowell's] father was a railway man... and he was a trade unionist and I think [he had an influence] you know when she made up her mind, she was a great girl Selene.

Miss Gallagher remembered only one of the remaining Catholic members of the Branch Committee, Miss McFarland:

She was very staunch for a while, although her people were inclined to be very Irish, but I don't know what it was [made her join the NUTGW]. She worked down in Wilkinson's... Gerry Morrison - he was Stephen's right hand man - her and him were at logger heads always and she used to be able to tell me the crack, what was going on and what Gerry Morrison said they were going to do and what they weren't going to do.

Family connections were also an important factor in Miss Gallagher's decision not to desert the NUTGW. Prior to the breakaway, she was just 'a sort of [union] member, that was all, it was the breakaway that just set me off.' She told me that she and her sister remained loyal to the NUTGW because:

We knew it was the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] and you see that picture above your head... William Logue, my uncle, when he got married, he married late in life, and the Tailor and Garment Workers' presented him with that picture. Its a very old thing and I keep cleaning and varnishing it, but that is the sort of contact we had, and then with my uncle there - it was a trade union.

Logue was a prominent labour activist in the 1920s (see chapter three). Miss Gallagher told me that he was her mother's brother, and that following the death of his wife he had been unable to carry on his trade union work and look after his two children so her mother had brought them up; she concluded by saying 'the trade union must have been in the family.' Nevertheless, Miss Gallagher's and her sister's decision to stay in the NUTGW was not an easy one: as I mentioned earlier, all the other trade unionists in Harrison's had

supported the breakaway, and when she visited the offices of the NUTGW, 'it was like a dead end, there was nobody about, Macgougan wasn't to be found.' Neither of them knew what to do until,

I remember the brother [an official in the Post Office Workers' union in Belfast] sending me word to stay put... it was him pushed me at the beginning when... Stephen took down, he told me to stand firm, [but] of course the principle was there.

When Miss Gallagher says that she did not support the breakaway because of principle, she means that she did not like,

the national[ism], the Irishness in Stephen [McGonagle]... it was just the principle... I was, I suppose I was always more or less British minded more or less.

Miss Gallagher tended to pose the breakaway and the subsequent division of shirt workers between the ITGWU and the NUTGW in terms of Irishness verses Britishness or national mindedness verses British mindedness: she described McGonagle's supporters in the following way,

Gerry Morrison, a cutter down in Wilkinson's factory down the Strand [Road]... and Paddy Hamill were the guts behind Stephen and all them dealings; they were the real Derry nationalists.

I asked, 'what were their motives?' she replied, 'the same, just the same.' Miss Gallagher's identification of anti-nationalism as one of the major factors in her decision not to leave the NUTGW may seem problematical in relation to the argument of the previous section. Undoubtedly, there is an element of hindsight here, for when I asked her about the origins of the breakaway she did not mention nationalism, she simply replied:

The way I heard it was that Stephen wanted full autonomy for the union in Derry... he didn't want to be trucking with across the water... the one wanted to be bigger than the other [a reference to Macgougan and McGonagle]... Stephen was ambitious.

And, her main initial reason for staying with the NUTGW were the family connections discussed above. However, it is possible that she was unusually prescient about the the way in which the breakaway developed - Macgougan thought so.

Miss Gallagher was born and grew up in the same neighbourhood as McGonagle and Miss McMorris; it was, as I have already shown, a nationalist area with a strong sense of community. Thus, in her

British mindedness, and in her support for the NUTGW, Miss Gallagher was not conforming to the norms of her social position. How did someone from her background come to be 'British minded'?

I was always more or less British minded although my folk here, the sister and that, the earlier days like, they were very Irish, but then things change in your life and you go through life and you see it. I'd been to England you see, which stood to me I think... before the War [in 1939 Miss Gallagher went to England to become a nun; she never completed her novitiate because she became ill and returned to Derry to recuperate in 1944 or 1945 - See Appendix 1] and I worked with all kinds of people, different religions... It [religion] never interfered with anything or politics or anything. I think that helped me in a way.

Miss Gallagher had mixed feelings about the the Nationalist Party in Derry:

You see, you were brought up here you were nationalists, you supported Paddy Maxwell in those days and your mother and father sort of knew him... but those kind of men were more sincere, but the others after him - I never did agree with Eddie McAteer^{'9'} so you may say I was outside the pale of their politics from the beginning and then when a thing like this comes up [ie the breakaway] it comes out of you. My mother was a great influence on me, she was reared in England partly and went to an English school. Although she was taught with the nuns there [in England] when she came to Derry she used to relate to me how - when she came she would have been in her 12s [12 years of age] - she was down with the teachers here, well the nuns were prejudiced because she came from England... and she always thought she got a raw deal with the nuns... and I remember her telling me that, because she was gifted enough. She was a singer, she had a good appearance and she was a forward person... She always talked about her schooling there in Liverpool, I think that had an influence on me too, she didn't agree with Derry politics.

Miss Gallagher's alienation from nationalism was not based on socialism,

I wasn't partial to the Labour Party while I was there [in England] because we were instructed how to vote in those days and you were voting tory, you were told who you were to put down... when you were in the convent... you were told, and then you enquired and you talked and they talked and you listened to them and they would say about the Labour candidate and what he hadn't done and what he was doing.

Miss Gallagher presents a contradictory picture of the Protestants who joined the NUTGW after the CWU transferred to the ITGWU. Despite her British mindedness, Miss Gallagher did not

identify herself with Unionism or with the Protestant community: she referred to Protestants and Unionists as 'the other side of the house.' And, by her lights, many of the Protestants who rejoined the NUTGW were behaving in a manner which was just as sectarian as those who had taken the breakaway union into the ITGWU:

McCarthy's [factory]... was a bit of a [NUTGW] stronghold... if you've heard the history of Derry that was sectarian again, and then you had the Ebrington, they were like McCarthy's: their [Unionist] politics wouldn't have let them [join the ITGWU].

On the other hand, she strongly resented the view, evidently commonplace at the time, that the NUTGW was a sectarian, Protestant union:

The few that joined up with me [in the NUTGW] were mostly Catholics, but then the Protestants started coming. And this is what I used to hate because... they['d] say she's joining because it's British based... but there was [several Catholics] we had Selene McDowell... [and] Paddy O'Connor.

Moreover, she makes clear that the reconstruction of the NUTGW in Derry was not the result of a 'knee-jerk' sectarian response on the part of Protestant shirt workers to the CWU's merger with the ITGWU, but a process whereby she gradually established relations of trust and mutual respect with a disparate group of women shirtmakers whom she had not met before:

Some of them would talk in McCarthy's and say 'well Miss Gallagher is doing shop steward in Harrison's [factory] and somebody else is [shop steward elsewhere]' and they would get a few like that. You sort of knew by their politics what they [would] do... I was the odd one out because coming from Derry and coming from this [nationalist] area... [but] they were really friends of mine got through the union: a Mrs Hughes of Fountain Street and one, they worked in Hunter's [factory] at the time and they would send me messages, well then I got to know them and I used to visit them on a Sunday evening. Then one of them came on the Committee when we got organised and got the Committee going, and they must have thought I was doing alright because when we got the committee together they elected me the chairman, the chairperson... elected president.

Mrs Henderson was one of those Protestant women who became active in the NUTGW for the first time in the period after the transfer of the CWU to the ITGWU. She now regards the breakaway as a nationalist plot orchestrated by McGonagle: 'he wanted an Irish based

union, thats what it all boiled down to because... the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union was] London based'. So far as she is concerned, the CWU was only 'a move, because he had to start off like that, you had to be in a small union before he got affiliated... he had that well planned.' And she left me in no doubt that as a Unionist, she 'didn't want to be going into an Irish based union.' She was so vehement about this that at first she denied ever having belonged to a union of which McGonagle was an official. However, her recollections in subsequent interviews indicate that she joined the NUTGW while working in McCarthy's factory in the late 1940s, joined the CWU, and rejoined the NUTGW when the CWU transferred to the ITGWU. Moreover, in disentangling her recollections it becomes apparent that Mrs Henderson's opposition to the ITGWU was based on more than the fact that it was Irish.

Mrs Henderson explained her interest in trade unionism in terms of her experience of the introduction of work study to McCarthy's: 'what made me really take on union work was Stephen McGonagle, his attitude [to work study]... because he really sided with that.' The reader may recall (see section 4.2) that Mrs Henderson took McGonagle to task about his enthusiasm for work study. Prior to the introduction of work study and her argument with McGonagle, Mrs Henderson was 'a member of the union, but I was in no way active then.' She dated her argument with McGonagle over work study as having taken place shortly after the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II - that is, around June 1953. In this period, the only union of which Mrs Henderson could have been a member was the CWU. Moreover she claimed that following her argument with McGonagle he asked her to be a shop steward; an offer which she refused.

When I asked Mrs Henderson why she joined the NUTGW rather than the ITGWU she cited a number of reasons in addition to the fact that the former is British and the latter Irish:

Because it [the NUTGW] was unique, it was the only union that catered for shirt [workers]... Stephen McGonagle, as I say, took every body on [ie workers other than garment workers]. I know its prejudiced but... I didn't like what he done on Jack Macgougan; I didn't like that attitude of his either. But to me, to be quite honest, and being quite outspoken, it was a British based union [emphatic] and that was my - why I - I didn't want to be going into any Irish

based union, because the way I looked at it the Tailor and Garments [ie NUTGW] got our [wage] rise. The Irish Transport couldn't get any increase in our wages and it was the Tailor and Garment's done it and it was them that put the work, the machinery through, and therefore you had to support the one that was after the girls' interest... as I say the [NUTGW] catered only for the shirt - well, garment - workers: tailors and tailoresses.

As I noted in section 4.2, Mrs Henderson conceded that her judgement of McGonagle contains an element of retrospective reassessment:

Stephen McGonagle was one of these men, I don't know how to explain him: he wanted to outshine Jack Macgougan an awful lot. He tried really to do Jack an awful lot of harm; although I didn't know Jack Macgougan then... but I understood it later on - when I got to know Jack - what this was all about.

Similarly, her comparison of the institutional characteristics of the NUTGW and ITGWU probably owes much to her subsequent experience of union work. At the time, her decision to leave the CWU/ITGWU and rejoin the NUTGW may have been influenced by her disagreement with McGonagle over work study, but, as she makes clear, the crucial factor was that the ITGWU was Irish and the NUTGW British. This decision was an expression of Mrs Henderson's Unionism, but, although she refers to 'prejudice' in the statement quoted above, it would be wrong to characterise it as sectarian. After all, the union which she, and other Protestant shirt workers, rejoined was jointly administered by a member of the IrLP, Macgougan; a Dublin Catholic with a republican past¹⁰, O'Connor; and a Branch Committee which was composed mainly of Catholics. Moreover, to describe Mrs Henderson as sectarian would, as will become apparent in the next chapter, make a nonsense of her subsequent union career.

6.5 Inter-Union Relations and Sectarianism

According to Lerner (1961: 197) 'the relations between breakaways and established unions create intense bitterness among union members.' In part, this bitterness arises from the circumstances of the breakaway, but it is perpetuated by the inter-

union rivalry which usually follows a breakaway. Most often it is the established union which wins this contest. Established unions usually refuse to allow members of the breakaway to participate in negotiating bodies and sanction employers who deal with the breakaway, and, as James (1984: 2) points out, 'without recognition the breakaway union quickly disappears.' In the Derry case, the contest was more evenly balanced. To be sure, the NUTGW, Derry Trades Council, and the SMF did not officially recognise the breakaway, but, from the outset, local employers revealed a willingness to work with its representatives. And, once part of the ITGWU the breakaway could defy threats from the NUTGW and its ally, the ATGWU, to sanction its members by threatening retaliatory action against NUTGW and ATGWU members in the Republic of Ireland (see LS: 22 October 1953). Moreover, although the NUTGW was party to the negotiations with the British clothing manufacturers' federations which set the parameters for negotiations in Northern Ireland, the CWU/ITGWU was represented on the Northern Ireland Shirtmaking Wages Council which determined local minimum wage rates: as Quinn pointed out: 'you see, the Wages Council doesn't recognise unions as such, and we had seats from [when we were members of] the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union]'. Although the Derry situation was more evenly balanced than the cases studied by Lerner, the rivalry between the NUTGW and the ITGWU in Derry was no less bitter.

An industrial review of 1953 published in the Londonderry Sentinel noted that

management-labour relations [in the shirt industry] have remained remarkably good inspite of an inter-union conflict which has regrettably raged throughout the year. (LS: 31 December 1953).

This is not surprising, for, as we have seen, the NUTGW had virtually no members in Derry until the end of 1953, and for much of the year its officials had been negotiating with the the leaders of the breakaway in an effort to persuade them to rejoin the NUTGW. However, following the CWU's merger with the ITGWU, and the re-establishment of a functioning Derry Branch of the NUTGW, inter-union relations became sharply competitive. On 31 October 1953, the Londonderry Sentinel reported that NUTGW members in the laundry of an unnamed factory struck for 'over an hour' when several of their

colleagues decided to switch allegiance to the ITGWU. None of my respondents recalled this dispute. Early in 1954 each union submitted separate and different wage claims to the Wages Council; Macgougan claimed that the ITGWU's submission 'could prejudice negotiations between the employers' federation and the NUTGW in Britain' (DJ: 5 February 1954). An impression of the furtive, incestuous, even fearful, atmosphere which surrounded inter-union relations in this period can be gained from Miss Gallagher's recollections. 'I think Macgougan was afraid of McGonagle because he was inclined to use force'; I asked, 'physical force?' she replied,

Oh, he would have done it, if he could have got hold of him because even with myself there was days when I come out of work and going back after my lunch and he'd be waiting for me in the car with three or four of the members and he'd say, 'here, listen Miss Gallagher, when are you going to do the right thing?' and him and me into it in the car on the street and I go back to my work and I'm not worth a button because of the abuse. They used to say that Mr Macgougan was nervous about him, but I could understand, because he opened his office opposite our offices and it was like a pantomime: he was looking out of the window to see who was going into our offices and our crowd were looking out to see who was going into his, and if there was a meeting in the lunch hour we could say 'well, such and such a one went in.'

As we have seen, following the CWU merger with the ITGWU, and the defection of Protestant workers, trade unionism in the shirt industry had, despite the wishes of the protagonists, assumed a sectarian form such that the members of the ITGWU were mostly Catholics and the members of the NUTGW mostly Protestants. Moreover, the activists in each union had come to regard their rivals as having been motivated by political or religious prejudices. Nevertheless, inter-union rivalry was not expressed in a markedly sectarian way.

In fact, judging from the recollections of Mrs Henderson, Macgougan, and Miss Gallagher, it was the latter, the Catholic president of the NUTGW in Derry who seems to have been subject to the most pressure. Apart from being harassed on her way to or from work, she was visited in her home by several supporters of the ITGWU who worked in Harrrison's factory:

They come on Christmas eve... no it was a few days before Christmas... for I was finishing-off cakes, and the girl Sarah D... she was from Rosemount and she was very militant

for Stephen, very Irish - all her generation was, we knew them, not only as workers, we knew them as neighbours on the area, and they came and asked to see me and I said, 'well I don't think there's anything I have to say to youse,' but I didn't want to keep them on the step and I brought them in and we were sitting here. They got nowhere because they said to me, 'after all it's an Irish union and Stephen's a Derryman,' and all this, and we had an argument and it was really politics in a sense... It was friendly but then they were putting up arguments and there was one or two I was prejudiced [against], because like, well, I knew their backgrounds and I knew what they were at and I said, 'no, that was my principle and I'm sticking to it.'

Miss Gallagher thus came under singular and concerted pressure from ITGWU activists to switch her trade union allegiance, or at least to stop working so enthusiastically for the NUTGW. Undoubtedly, she was singled out because she was the NUTGW's leading activist in Derry, and also because she and her sister were, in the winter of 1953-54, the only members of the NUTGW in what was otherwise an ITGWU stronghold; but she seems to have aroused particular annoyance on the part of ITGWU activists because she was breaking communal solidarity: the women who visited her house were not just work mates but neighbours, and they invoked communal loyalties - 'after all it's an Irish Union and Stephen's a Derryman.' Moreover, she was the victim of gossip, that informal sanction which - as many social scientists have noted - is often used to discipline nonconformists. She told me that O'Connor's support was very important in enabling her to maintain her difficult position, and alleged that supporters of the ITGWU promoted a rumour that they were having an affair:

We would go to the Trades Council, he would take me to the Trades Council and bring me back. So much so that they used to say that they thought I was doing a line with him at the time. That's the sort of thing Stephen would stoop to. Stephen would stoop to those kind of things... manys a day. But you just rose above that. Union meetings, and weekends [educational] and conferences - that was all I did, I never socialised much.

Such gossip would have been all the more damaging both to Miss Gallagher and to O'Connor because O'Connor had a wife and family in Dublin. There is some oral and documentary evidence which supports Miss Gallagher's claim; it will be discussed in the next chapter.

Sectarian feeling and political differences first found practical expression during the bitter inter-union dispute which developed in Harrison's factory in April 1954. The dispute began on Monday 5 April when 80 workers in Harrison's laundry and finishing department, all members of the ITGWU, refused to work with a smoother who was a member of the NUTGW. They did not leave the laundry, they simply refused to work. The NUTGW member, named Jean Harte, had started work in the factory two weeks previously and had refused to give up her membership of the NUTGW (DJ: 9 April 1954 and LS: 10 April 1954). McGonagle later claimed that the ITGWU was not trying to enforce a closed shop and that the women had struck because Miss Harte had claimed management support in refusing to join the ITGWU - the ITGWU was in dispute with management not the NUTGW (DJ: 12 April 1954). It is true that the management refused to sack Miss Harte, and upheld the right of the NUTGW to organise in the factory; however it is noteworthy that the proposals for ending the dispute put forward by both management and the ITGWU were essentially the same - that Miss Harte be suspended with pay or moved to another department pending talks between the NUTGW and the ITGWU or independent mediation - and that it was the NUTGW which refused to negotiate on this basis (DJ: 12 and 19 April 1954). On Friday 16 April Harrison's management shut-down all production and laid off approximately 500 workers; they claimed that they had insufficient storage space for the shirts which had been produced but could not be 'finished' because of the strike. In response, McGonagle offered to drop the demand that Miss Harte either change her union affiliation or be suspended if the NUTGW agreed to negotiate (DJ: 16 April 1954). That evening 600 factory workers gathered outside the NUTGW offices, the report does not make it clear whether they supported or opposed the NUTGW (LS: 17 April 1954). The factory resumed production on Wednesday 21 April 1954 (some of the period of closure was the Easter holiday). The NUTGW offered its support to any workers going to to work (DJ: 21 April 1954), but only five workers, all said to be members of the NUTGW, responded (LS: 22 April 1954). The dispute was settled the next day: Miss Harte was permitted to retain her job and her NUTGW membership, but the ITGWU was granted formal recognition by the SMF. The ITGWU presented this as vindication of their struggle for the 'right of free association.' The NUTGW claimed that the

strikers had been attempting to enforce a closed shop, but that they had failed: Jean Harte was still working in the laundry and was still a member of the NUTGW. Management presented the agreement with the ITGWU as an expression of its ongoing policy of 'neutrality' between the two unions (DJ: 23 April 1954).

Those of my respondents who were members of the ITGWU were markedly reticent on the subject of this dispute. Neither Miss Cosgrave nor Miss McMorris choose to comment on it. Quinn explained the dispute to me in the following way:

There had been a bit of feeling against Harrison's: you see, when the dispute came to a head, Harrison's took the attitude - suddenly, suddenly - that they didn't recognise us.

As we have seen, the newspaper evidence indicates that it was Miss Harte's membership of the NUTGW that was at issue, not union recognition - Harrison's recognised the ITGWU. However, when I asked Quinn about Miss Harte he replied:

I can't remember that... I'm not saying it's not right... [you] see the laundry was 100% [ITGWU]... I don't remember anybody going into the laundry, because if I remember the laundry they wouldn't have tolerated a woman going in [wry smile].

Fortunately, Miss Gallagher and Macgougan were more forthcoming. When the strike began, Miss Gallagher, her sister, and Miss Harte were the only NUTGW members in Harrison's. Miss Gallagher stopped work when the dispute began, but only because,

when they stopped working upstairs for us, we had no work so we had to come out, it wasn't to say we came out of our own accords, there wasn't any work available for examiners, so we had to go out.

As the NUTGW representative in the factory, Miss Gallagher

had to go to her [Miss Harte's] aid... they [management] gave me permission to go to her, and she put in an awful time and they were sitting on the table singing and dancing and she was working and it was a most extraordinary thing and I would go down to have a word with her and give her support and to encourage her, it was terrible.

As a result of Miss Gallagher's efforts two or three of the strikers joined the NUTGW:

There was a manager there [in the laundry], Mr Kennedy, now he was there many years, very respected manager and very disciplined and I went into [the laundry] to see some of the girls and, actually, they were going to put me out and

he had to intervene himself. But one of them said, 'well I don't care,' she just used the word, she said, 'to hell with them, I'm joining the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union],' and she - there was a Mrs Wilson, [she] was a friend of mine and somebody else... and they joined and that broke the ice... They paid me [union dues], well I had to go into them if they wanted... to see [me], well I was a nervous wreck when I'd come out because you were getting abuse - they wouldn't even let you speak - you couldn't repeat it. (see also DJ: 14 April 1954).

On one occasion, Miss Gallagher and Miss Harte required a police escort to get home through a crowd of ITGWU members. Miss Gallagher recalls that this incident occurred at the end of the dispute, but it may have been the day that Harrison's factory was shut down, when, as I have already noted, the Londonderry Sentinel reported that a crowd gathered outside the NUTGW offices (LS: 17 April 1954). She told me:

The night he [McGonagle] got recognised with the employers and we were over in the union rooms we couldn't get home for the crowd outside and then in the end we had to get the police, Macgougan was there that night, and we had to get home and we got up to a friend's house - a girl that worked in our office, Margaret Deany, she'd an aunt in William Street [at the entrance to the Bogside] - and the police escorted us to William Street, and even out in William Street they were waiting outside and Miss McMorris was one of them... stood with a crowd.

But Miss Gallagher and her sister were Catholics, so how did sectarian feeling come into the dispute? The short answer is that Miss Harte was a Protestant. However, Miss Harte was not an innocent victim of Catholic sectarianism; according to Macgougan,

What happened was: Harrison's was partially in [the Irish] Transport and partially in our union, and frankly I think [Mrs Emberely a shop steward in McCarthy's factory] planted one of our members... in the laundry, and it provoked a strike, and the terms of the settlement were that our members would have free access, but the Clothing Workers' [Union], it was Irish Transport [Union] then, could be recognised [by the employers]... [the strike] was very tough. I'm absolutely clear in my own mind that [Mrs Emberely] organised it... This young girl [Miss Harte], God she was courageous: she held her union card up as she was walking in... The laundry, to be candid, had a rougher type of girl in it in general - it was a rougher type of job... Arthur [the managing director] said, 'under no circumstances would any worker be sacked because they were a member of a union.'

Moreover, Macgougan and Miss Gallagher told me that Miss Harte's father was a member of the Orange Order. Miss Gallagher made it

clear that he supported his daughter throughout the strike:

Miss Harte went through a bad time... for a while... but she was only one individual... the father was a great stalwart, he wouldn't let her move. No you see I was getting it [abuse] all the time because I was sort of promoting her and I was promoting the others. I think she went out of the town in the end. What happened her? She got married or something. No she didn't give up her membership - they did harass her a lot.

I asked, 'did her father support her?' Miss Gallagher replied,

Very much... they told me that's what kept her going... that's when it [sectarianism] began to show its head really... when the Catholics got to hear this [that her father was an Orange man] they put the pressure on more.

Miss Harte and Mrs Emberely emigrated from Derry in June 1954 (Minutes: 2 June 1954). Miss Gallagher continued to 'service' the two women in the laundry whom she had recruited during the strike and remained a target for insults from ITGWU members:

It was very bitter... even if you had to go into the department and some of these members were there, they would slag you, they didn't care... they would shout about me being British, you know all this kind of thing, I was a scab really. Because at that time they wanted a closed shop in the laundry.

The strike in Harrison's lasted 17 days in all. Although not the longest dispute involving women in the history of the Derry shirt industry - Grew (1987: 215-219) notes that 36 shirtmakers in Tillie and Henderson's struck for four weeks in 1907 - it was probably the most acrimonious.

6.6 Conclusion

The analysis presented in this chapter may be summarised in the following way. The breakaway began as an intra-union power struggle focused on the personalities of the local secretary and the Belfast based regional officer of the NUTGW. Support for the breakaway amongst the rank and file was based on a potent localism which was, in turn, based on the feeling that Derry, as a city, had been neglected by the Unionist authorities in Belfast. Following the transfer of the CWU to the ITGWU, a union with a strong historical

identification with Irish nationalism, trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry assumed a sectarian form: the officials, activists, and virtually all of the members of the ITGWU were Catholics; the local official and most of the activists in the NUTGW were also Catholic, but most of the members were Protestant. Moreover, the activists in each union came to regard the other union as being a sectarian formation composed of people whose union affiliation was the expression of religious and/or political prejudice. However, the transfer of the CWU to the ITGWU was not a politically inspired decision, rather, it was forced on the leaders of the breakaway by the circumstances in which they found themselves, and by the institutional structure of the Irish trade union movement at the time. Indeed, throughout the episode, the officials and main activists on both sides of the split took steps to obviate sectarianism. Nevertheless, the ensuing rivalry between the NUTGW and the ITGWU resulted in an outbreak of serious sectarian conflict in at least one workplace.

The most interesting feature of this episode in relation to the broader literature is that it reverses the causal connection usually held to apply between sectarianism in the workplace and trade unionism. According to the traditional Irish marxists whose work I reviewed in chapter one, sectarian conflict in the workplace - generated by competition for jobs and religious discrimination combined with ideological manipulation by the ruling class - created severe problems for trade unionists seeking to unite workers of different religious and political outlooks, and inhibited the development of trade unionism. However, as we saw in section 4.4, discrimination in the allocation of women's jobs was not a contentious issue between Protestants and Catholics in the shirt industry; and although my respondents were always aware of sectarian differences among shirt workers they did not regard sectarianism as a problem with respect to trade unionism until the breakaway. Furthermore, the breakaway originated in a trade union power struggle of a kind which is endemic in trade unions in Britain and elsewhere. There is no evidence that either employers or the local ruling class sought to manipulate the conflict within the NUTGW or the subsequent conflict between the NUTGW and the ITGWU into

sectarian channels. To be sure, one of the protagonists in the Harrison's dispute was given moral support by her father who was a member of the Orange Order, but this hardly constitutes ruling class manipulation. Indeed, contrary to what the traditional marxists would have us believe, the Unionist Lord Mayor of Derry issued a statement urging the two unions to negotiate a settlement of the strike (DJ: 14 April 1954); the Catholic Bishop and the Church of Ireland Bishop offered to mediate between the two unions; and the former called for the dispute to be resolved 'in the spirit of Eastertide and christian charity' (DJ: 19 April 1954). Thus, the Derry breakaway contradicts the usual view of sectarianism and trade unionism: sectarian conflict in the workplace was generated by a specifically trade union conflict, not vice versa¹¹.

Yet, in another sense this episode seems to confirm one aspect of the traditional marxist thesis: sectarian divisions were, to use Rolston's phrase, 'reconstituted within trade unionism' despite the wishes and efforts of the main protagonists; it was an unintended consequence of their actions. I will reserve judgement on this matter until the subsequent development of the two unions concerned has been examined.

CHAPTER 7: RIVALRY AND ACCOMMODATION: TRADE UNIONISM IN THE DERRY SHIRT INDUSTRY 1954-1968

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will be concerned with the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry during the period between the end of the dispute in Harrison's and the onset of the current troubles; that is, roughly between April 1954 and the end of 1968. For much of this time trade unionism in the shirt industry was dominated by rivalry and mutual antagonism between members of the NUTGW and ITGWU. Although the inter-union rivalry was often quite fierce, a *modus vivendi* developed in the late 1960s. The main theme of this chapter, therefore, will be inter-union relations, and the main focus will be on the NUTGW and ITGWU; the other union with members in the shirt industry during this period, the ATGWU is, by and large, marginal to this theme.

I will examine the rivalry and conflict between the Derry Branches of the NUTGW and ITGWU in section 7.3, and examine the factors underlying the rapprochement between the representatives of the two organisations in section 7.4; first, however, I want to discuss a bitter internal argument within the Derry Branch of the NUTGW which, for a time, seems to have posed a greater threat to its existence than did its external rival.

7.2 Intra-Union Conflict and Accommodation

Although, as we have seen, most of the 150 or so women who joined the NUTGW in November 1953 were Protestants, a small majority of Branch Committee members were Catholic. The Protestants were mainly Unionists who objected to the fact that the ITGWU was an Irish

union, the Catholics included women with a nationalist outlook who had joined the NUTGW rather than the ITGWU because of family loyalties. From the outset, the Branch Committee was riven by an internal conflict in which the main issue was Macgougan's prominence as a left-wing, anti-partitionist politician. Bearing in mind the significance attached to sectarianism in the literature on trade unionism in Northern Ireland, two questions immediately spring to mind: first, how did the conflict relate to the political and religious heterogeneity of the Branch Committee? And, second, did religious and political differences among the union activists adversely affect the development of the Branch. I will consider each of these questions in turn.

Macgougan certainly felt that the conflict within the Derry Branch of the NUTGW had a sectarian logic. He told me that

There's no doubt about it, my effectiveness as a union organiser was impaired by my political [activity]... there was no doubt, particularly when I got my name in the paper for things... there'd be a bit of an upheaval, a threat to throw the cards in. You were in danger of tramping on corns both ways, because everyone with a left-of-centre outlook was a communist in those days on the Catholic side, and you got a label very quickly if you'd a national outlook on the Protestant side.

There is evidence that members of the Branch Committee were anti-communist. For example, they raised funds for Hungary following the Russian invasion of that country in 1956 - this was the only occasion that discussion of an international issue was minuted (Minute: 4 December 1956). And it is true that Macgougan's left-of-centre ideas were of concern to NUTGW activists in Derry. For example, in December 1955 Miss Gallagher told the committee that she was distressed by the adverse publicity caused to the union by Macgougan addressing Derry Trades Council in the company of 'another communist' (Minute: 13 December 1955). However, when I asked Miss Gallagher about this incident she told me that her 'distress' was shared by Protestants:

There was one meeting he [Macgougan] was at, somebody brought in a clipping from one of the papers. She was from McCarthy's factory, I don't know who it was, and he was speaking in Cork on a platform... there was all shades of opinion on the platform... but there was somebody was a great communist in Belfast... Betty Sinclair and somebody else. They were like a red rag to a bull when they seen him on the platform with these people - even Stephen's

[McGonagle] crowd would throw that at me, that was one of the arguments even: that Sunday they came here to ask me to stop collecting [NUTGW subscriptions] they said sure he's [Macgougan] hob nobbing with Betty Sinclair and - was it Barr [Andy Barr]?, it was a shipyard [man] and all that crowd. They would throw that [Macgougan fraternising with communists] at me.

Macgougan was not, nor ever had been, a member of the Communist Party of Ireland, and the allegation about his communist sympathies was not pursued. Of greater concern to the members of the Branch Committee was his espousal of nationalist grievances. At a meeting held on 24 January 1956 the 'vice-chairman' of the Committee, Mrs Pollock, reported that 'a large section' of the Derry membership had been offended by a press report which quoted Macgougan as saying - during a debate on 'Partition in the Labour Movement' - that Catholics were discriminated against in Northern Ireland. The Committee passed a vote of no confidence in Macgougan. Mrs Pollock was a Protestant who worked in McCarthy's factory and Macgougan recalls her as a particularly vehement Unionist. However, it was not just Protestants who were critical of Macgougan's statement about discrimination. At a subsequent Committee meeting, held in the presence of Macgougan and some members of the union's National Executive, four other women expressed support for the no confidence motion: Miss Finlay who worked in McArthur and Beattie's, Miss Hughes who worked in Hunter's, Selly McDowell who worked in the Rosemount factory, and Miss McFarland who worked in Wilkinson's. The first two women were Protestants, the second two were Catholics. Miss Finlay claimed that she was 'faced with considerable loss of interest' in the union because of Macgougan's statement; Miss McFarland said that, on this occasion, she agreed with Macgougan's view but felt that it was not in the union's interest for him to have expressed it in public; they all urged the National Executive to restrain Macgougan from making further political statements in public. Macgougan responded by saying that the statement which had offended the Branch had been taken out of context, that he had expressed a personal view and not used a union platform, and that it could not be claimed that he was not competent as regional officer. He refused to give an undertaking not to speak in public (Minute: 11 February 1956).

Macgougan's critics were not happy with this response, nor did they think that the Executive was treating the matter with sufficient seriousness (Minute: 6 March 1956). Another meeting with representatives of the National Executive was arranged. This time it was Miss Gallagher who put the case against Macgougan. She said that since the the breakaway Macgougan's activities 'had been a constant source of embarrassment' to the members; it had been hoped that things would improve with the appointment of Mr Ollis, but they had not (Charles Ollis had replaced O'Connor as Branch secretary in March 1954, see below). She concluded her statement by saying that several shop stewards had threatened to resign over the issue, and that she and her fellow workers were considering similar action. Miss Gallagher's statement was echoed by Miss O'Doherty, another Catholic, who is reported to have said that 'the vast majority of members that she represented [felt that Macgougan] had insulted their religious convictions.' By this stage, however, a definite pro-Macgougan faction had emerged; it was centred around Mrs Henderson, the Protestant shop steward from McCarthy's and Mrs McGowan, a Catholic shop steward who worked in Tillie and Henderson's. Of the two it was Mrs Henerson who was most vociferous in Macgougan's defence. Macgougan told me

I made a speech in a debate with David Bleakley (a prominent NILP member) in which I described Catholics as second class citizens, that phrase wasn't well known in those days and it got a headline and there was a row in the Derry Branch - every time I made a statement the Branch Committee [objected]. One girl said, 'I agree with what you said but you'd no right saying it,' and Martha [Henderson] chimes in, 'I don't agree with what he said but he's every bloody right saying it!' I think that's interesting, I mean I like that.

The meeting concluded on a conciliatory note: the spokesperson for the Executive said that although Macgougan's statements 'had harmed the union [they had] confidence in him'; that disaffiliation was not warranted; and that, having exercised their right to criticise, the Committee should 'set an example' and remain loyal to the union (Minute: 10 March 1956). After this meeting the intra-union conflict abated and open criticism of Macgougan's politics ceased.

Thus, although the the argument within the Derry Branch of the NUTGW was focused on Magougan's socialist republican politics, it

cannot be understood in terms of sectarianism. Macgougan's critics included Catholics as well as Protestants, his main ally was a Protestant, and, lest it be forgotten, Macgougan himself was from a Protestant background. How, then, is this conflict to be understood? Undoubtedly, Macgougan's critics were worried that some of his public statements would cause Protestant workers to defect. However, it was not so simple as this: the evidence suggests that underlying the argument about Macgougan's politics was an internal power struggle.

Actually, it would seem that there were two inter-linked power struggles: one between Macgougan and O'Connor, and the other between Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson. Macgougan claims that O'Connor 'was trying to get me the sack,' and implies that he wanted a full-time union post. It is not possible to corroborate this, but it is worth pointing out that O'Connor was only in Derry as the temporary Branch secretary and that he was a lay activist in the NUTGW who usually worked in the garment trade in Dublin; moreover, there is ample evidence that O'Connor intrigued against Macgougan. Miss Gallagher recalled the occasion when the Branch passed the vote of no confidence in Macgougan:

Then Paddy O'Connor, of course he made the balls [sic] right enough for us, but he let us see in the light: 'now this is the kind of way it's [ie Macgougan's politics] going to effect the membership.' We had the Committee meeting and said we'd have to get Macgougan down [to Derry] because we weren't confident - we weren't going to put up with it. I remember the night that we did it. The night that we were there Macgougan turned the tables on me. He said that he was surprised because he had something to say that night. He said that Paddy O'Connor... had done that: he'd written - who was in charge of the Amalgamated Transport [Union]?... Norman Kennedy - somebody had written to Norman Kennedy, and it was something to do with Macgougan, and Macgougan thought that I was at the back of it, and he hit me with it that night. And I remember it was a terrible sensation. I don't think the Committee were ever the same to him after it, because he was just going to put this thing on me. But it was Paddy O'Connor. He thought I was along with Paddy O'Connor, that I had known about it.

This quotation adds weight to the suggestion that O'Connor had encouraged Macgougan's critics, but it conflates things; the actual sequence of events, as revealed in the minutes of the Derry Branch of

the NUTGW, was as follows. On 8 December 1953, less than a month after the reconstitution of the Branch, the Committee passed a resolution, proposed by Selly McDowell and seconded by Mrs Emberey, to the effect that Macgougan's presence in Derry was an 'obstacle to progress' and urging that his visits be restrained. Then, in February 1954, O'Connor tendered his resignation. He said that he could no longer 'tolerate Macgougan's interference' in the Branch, but called on the rest of the Committee to remain loyal to the union. He was persuaded to stay on in Derry until the Committee had sent a delegation to the union's National Executive to complain about Macgougan (Minute: 15 February 1954). O'Connor's resignation was accepted, and Charles Ollis, a Catholic tailor who was originally from Dublin, was appointed full-time organising secretary in March 1954. Although O'Connor was no longer in Derry he was still a member of the NUTGW's National Executive and Irish Consultative Committee⁽¹⁾, and he continued to undermine Macgougan. Macgougan responded to this threat by making sure that O'Connor was not re-elected as Irish representative on the union's Executive: 'we got him off the Executive by the processes of democracy [wry smile].' What Macgougan means by this is that he persuaded a very popular member of the union in Dublin, Mr Lynch⁽²⁾, to come out of retirement and stand against O'Connor in the National Executive elections. Mr Lynch won the election. Despite losing his seat on the Executive, O'Connor stayed in contact with Miss Gallagher, and at some point during 1956 he approached the ATGWU with the suggestion that they absorb the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. It is this to which Miss Gallagher was referring when she said 'of course, Paddy O'Connor made the balls': Macgougan found out about the scheme and confronted Miss Gallagher about it at a Branch Committee meeting on 18 Decmber 1956. Although Miss Gallagher, in the statement quoted above, denied all knowledge of O'Connor's activities, the minutes record that she told the Committee that she had told O'Connor that she wanted no part of the scheme.

Miss Gallagher probably did not have any part in O'Connor's approach to the ATGWU, she was, after all, very loyal to the NUTGW; however, she made no secret of the fact that she would have preferred O'Connor to Macgougan as Irish Regional Organiser of the union. She

told me:

Paddy O'Connor knew how to go about, how to attract members into it [the union]. See Macgougan never would come down to the level, his own level, he might if you went to a social [event] or a dance or that. He mixed and had a dance and made himself at home, but he was always aloof.

She then described how the two of them had gone to the theatre when they were in London on union business, how impressed she had been by the dancing on the stage, and how disappointed she had been with Macgougan's response: he regarded the dancing as

the sign of an ill-spent youth... I always remembered that... I didn't think he [Macgougan] was suited to the job all that much: he could talk and he might have been clever in his own way, but he never was hi jack fella like.

There is no doubt that part of the tension between Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson derived from the fact that one supported O'Connor against Macgougan and the other supported Macgougan. Miss Gallager viewed the alliance between Macgougan, a socialist republican, and Mrs Henderson, a Unionist, with some suspicion; she told me with some amusement:

He [Macgougan] was very fond, very so so with Martha [Henderson]... you learn as you go along: you go to conferences and meetings... it was... [at the] meetings... that they got great.

Mrs Henderson was Macgougan's protégée. It was Macgougan who had encouraged her to become a shop steward in the first place: 'Mr Macgougan heard about me, how he did I don't know, but they asked me would I take on a shop steward.' Macgougan told me, 'she was good, she was one of the best [union activists]... she was a street above the average.' However, although Mrs Henderson defended Macgougan's right to engage in political activity she made it clear that she did not support his politics or agree with everything he said or did: referring to the disagreement over his remark about religious discrimination, she told me

I've always been a Unionist, but I believe in live and let live... I'm the type of person [whol]... if I thought a thing was fair and right and the person entitled to say it... [and] if I thought there was no malice behind a thing [I would not object], but if a [I] thought somebody was using something I'd expose it and have done... Jack [Macgougan] done a whole lot of things that I didn't like in him.

It is worth noting at this stage that although Mrs Henderson felt

strongly that 'a worker had to fight to get a decent living', she had 'no time' for labour politics whether it be Macgougan's left-wing anti-partitionism or the NILP's more British-oriented variety: she was a Unionist, or perhaps more accurately, a liberal Unionist.

There was more to the tension between Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson than that the former was critical of Macgougan and that the latter defended him: they were rivals for the leadership of the Branch. Macgougan told me:

I should mention that there was an edge between Martha Henderson and Kathy Gallagher, very much so... personality clash again. Kathy didn't like anybody near her throne and Martha liked going to conferences. She was always a centre of attraction, she was a very glamorous looking woman at that time.

And, indeed, soon after joining the Branch Committee, Mrs Henderson was questioning Miss Gallagher's authority:

There was a row down in Dublin where we had to vote, a bloc vote, and we were told by we're Committee - by Kathy Gallagher... [she] was in the chair - and we were told we didn't vote for it and it was something to do with a British based union. I didn't say aye or nye at the meeting... Maggie McGowan and I went to Dublin, and when I got it explained properly to me, I voted for it. Well, that's what started the row between Kathy Gallagher and me - she never liked me after that, she said I'd no right, I said, 'I have a mind of my own, I done what I thought was right.'

I now want to consider the effects of these interlinked conflicts on the development of the Branch. As we have seen, Macgougan refused to comply with the Branch Committee's demand that he curtail his political activities, and he remained one of the leading figures in the Northern section of the IrLP throughout the decade. The Executive of the NUTGW were unsympathetic to the protests of the Derry activists: Macgougan told me,

I had no problem with an English Executive. I said 'well, a trade union official active in the Labour Party, any objection?' - they were all that, they [his critics in Derry] got no change there.

Nevertheless, neither Miss Gallagher nor any other of Macgougan's critics carried out their threat to resign from the Branch Committee. On the contrary, having presented the case against Macgougan to the National Executive on two occasions (11 February 1956 and 21 February

1956), Miss Gallagher expressed a concern that the Committee had become divided into two factions, and urged that 'personal differences' be forgotten 'in the interests of progress' (Minute: 15 May 1956). She repeated this plea following Macgougan's exposure of O'Connor's approach to the ATGWU (Minute: 8 January 1957). Miss Gallagher's hostility to Macgougan and to his politics did not diminish - even today her resentment is evident - but they, in Miss Gallagher's words, 'agreed to differ'. Indeed, it would seem that there was a tacit agreement amongst all the activists - pro and anti Macgougan - that politics were not to be discussed at subsequent Committee meetings. Evidently, the activists were bound together, and to the NUTGW, by something stronger than the political and 'personal' differences which divided them. In view of the fact that, as was shown in the last chapter, many of the women who became involved in the NUTGW did so because they strongly objected to McGonagle's behaviour, to the breakaway, and to the ITGWU, it seems reasonable to suggest that it was this common hostility to the other union and a determination that the Derry Branch of the NUTGW should not succumb to it which transcended their differences with one another. In this context it is worth noting that Miss Gallagher qualified her criticisms of Mrs Henderson with the remark:

but she was very staunch... at times she was a flash in the pan, but she was loyal to the union and we needed her in the right place - in McCarthy's.

As part of an examination of the effects of the intra-union conflict on the development of the Branch, we must also consider whether Macgougan's continuing political activity had the effect on the wider membership that his critics feared; that is, did his espousal of nationalist grievances result in a decline in support for the NUTGW amongst Protestant workers? Miss Gallagher insisted to me that Protestant workers 'were watching his stance... when you be talking to the Committee members they'd be telling you what they were discussing in the factories', but she could not recall any example of a member leaving the union because she disagreed with Macgougan's politics. Moreover, when the religious composition of the 1957 Branch Committee^(a) is examined it becomes apparent that Protestant representation was greater than it had been in 1953-54. As was shown in the last chapter, of the 12 members of the 1953-54 Committee, 6

were Catholics, and 5 were Protestants - I was unable to discover the religious affiliation of the remaining 1, but she was probably a Protestant; moreover, both the chairman and the secretary were Catholics. In 1957 the chairman and secretary were Catholics, Miss Gallagher and Charles Ollis respectively, but the the number of Protestant Committee members had increased to 8 and the number of Catholics had decreased to 4.

Yet, one cannot help but suspect that the tensions between NUTGW activists and officials adversely affected the Branch in less tangible ways. There is no doubt that the ill-feeling created by the intra-union conflict dampened the enthusiasm of some activists. For example, Miss Finlay stopped attending Branch Committee meetings for a while; when she returned she attributed her absence to the 'unfriendly atmosphere' among Committee members (Minute: 8 January 1957). Moreover, the tension between Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson had a sequel: on 1 March 1960 the latter defeated the former in the election for the position of Branch president. Thereafter, Miss Gallagher and two of her allys, Mrs Pollock and Miss O'Doherty, stopped attending Branch Committee meetings for a time. Miss Gallagher's absence from Branch Committee meetings during 1960 and 1961 was only partly due to her resentment of Macgougan and Mrs Henderson: after several years of intense union activity she was keen to spend more of her free time with her sisters. She did not sever her links with the union; on the contrary, she continued to be very active as as shop steward in her factory, maintained her links with other activists through visiting, and after a year or so she returned to a more regular participation in the institutions of the union: the Branch Committee, the Irish Consultative Committee, and union conferences.

After the election of Mrs Henderson as Branch president attendance at meetings of the Committee dwindled and they became irregular, informal, un-minuted affairs (the last meeting of the Branch Committee recorded in the minute book took place on 6 March 1962). However, this cannot be attributed directly to the tensions between activists. It seems to have had more to do with the rapid turn over among full-time Branch officials in the late 1950s and

early 1960s. During 1957 Charles Ollis, who had replaced O'Connor as Branch secretary, began to neglect his responsibilities and was removed from the job at the end of the year '4'. His replacement, William Neill, was something of a stop-gap. He was close to retirement as secretary of the small Coleraine Branch of the NUTGW when he was asked to take on the additional responsibility of running the Derry Branch; his health was not good and he was not very effective as an organiser - one NUTGW activist described him as 'lackadaisical.' He retired in January 1963 and died four months later (GW: January 1963 and May 1963). The new Branch secretary was Billy Lindsay, a Protestant who had previously been a NUTGW activist in a hat manufacturers in Cookstown. He died suddenly in the early 1970s.

Notwithstanding the fall off in Branch Committee meetings, the overwhelming conclusion of this section is that, once again, the case of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry confounds the predominant view of trade unionism in the literature on Northern Ireland. The conflict within the the Derry Branch of the NUTGW was not a sectarian conflict: the protagonists did not line up against one another according to their religious identities, and its dynamic was the politics of union power and influence rather than the politics of national identity. To be sure, Unionist/nationalist differences were exposed in the course of the conflict, but the activists who helped organise the NUTGW in Derry revealed a willingness to accommodate their political differences in the interest of the Branch. Moreover, Macgougan's left-wing, anti-partitionist politics do not seem to have discouraged Protestant shirt workers from joining and becoming active in the union. Indeed, as will become apparent in the next section, the NUTGW was uniquely successful in attracting new members, Catholics as well as Protestants, in the 1960s.

7.3 Inter-Union Rivalry and the Changing Pattern of Union

Organisation in the Shirt Industry in the 1950s and 1960s

We have seen that although the breakaway began as a commonplace intra-union power struggle it resulted in a trade union structure which approximates to Rolston's notion of 'sectarian trade unionism': the membership of the ITGWU was mainly Catholic, and that of the NUTGW was mainly Protestant. Moreover, the activists in each organisation had come to suspect their counterparts of having been politically motivated, and the inter-union conflict which followed the CWU's merger with the ITGWU culminated in a dispute in Harrison's which had distinctly sectarian undertones. According to most of my respondents, inter-union relations at plant and local level remained mutually antagonistic, or, at best, unco-operative, throughout the 1950s and for most of the 1960s. In this section I will examine the hostility between the Derry Branches of the NUTGW and ITGWU, and consider the role of sectarianism in perpetuating it. I will then discuss the effect of inter-union hostility on the development of trade unionism in the industry.

Inter-union hostility was manifested in various ways. For example, NUTGW activists refused to sit with members of the ITGWU in negotiations with local employers. Of course, in refusing to sit with their ITGWU counterparts, NUTGW activists were merely enacting their union's official policy of not recognising the Derry Branch of the ITGWU, but they persisted with this policy despite the SMF's threat to negotiate with the ITGWU irrespective of whether or not the NUTGW representatives were present, and, as will become apparent in the next section, when Macgougan suggested that participation in joint negotiations with the ITGWU was advisable, some activists were vehemently opposed (see Minutes: 6 and 20 November 1956, 23 August 1960, and 23 October 1960). Thus, throughout the 1950s there was no co-operation between the two unions in the formulation of a common negotiating position with respect to management. However, it is important to note that there were no serious disagreements between members of the two unions with regard to wage settlements. Only three, fairly trivial, differences of opinion between the NUTGW and the ITGWU are mentioned in the documentary record. The first

occurred in 1954 when the NUTGW attempted to resist the implementation of a wage settlement proposed by the management in the three 'time and motion' factories because it was not based on the minimum time rate set by the Wages Council which they regarded as the 'accepted method of wage increase'. They felt that the management had based their case on the attitude of the ITGWU (Minutes: 11 May 1954, 19 October 1954, and 22 February 1955). The minutes do not record whether or not the NUTGW were successful. The second occurred when members of the ITGWU in the Rosemount factory accepted lower than the 'general' local wage rates; the NUTGW disapproved but, with few members in the factory there was little that they could do (Minutes: 14 and 28 May 1957). The third occurred in Tillie and Henderson's when NUTGW members wanted to dispute the rate set for a Marks and Spencer contract but 'the fact that most of the workers in another department were not members of this union and were not disputing the rate made it difficult to proceed further' (GW: October 1959).

To understand the factors underlying the perpetuation of inter-union hostility it is necessary to examine relations between the members of the two unions at factory level. Obviously, it is not possible for me to examine inter-union relations in each of the 30 or so factories which were in, and out, of production during the period under consideration. I will focus on two factories, Harrison's and McCarthy's. I have chosen these two factories because they are the ones about which I have the most knowledge: Miss Gallagher and Miss McMorris were shop stewards for the rival unions in Harrisons, and Mrs Henderson was NUTGW shop steward in McCarthy's. With respect to the latter factory I will also draw on the recollections of a member of the ITGWU, I shall call her Mary, who I met purely by chance but who worked in McCarthy's during a crucial phase in NUTGW-ITGWU relations⁽⁵⁾. However, it is important to point out that inter-union relations in these two factories were not typical: they were probably worse than in other factories. The Rosemount factory was probably more typical; according to Miss Cosgrave inter-union relations there were,

Silent, no they [the NUTGW] didn't make any difference. Now what they did in McCarthy's Factory I'm not too sure about... but like where I worked in Rosemount, there wouldn't have been any more than a half dozen in the other

union... the majority in our place was ITGWU, as I say to you if they had half a dozen that's all it would have been. '63

The fact that inter-union relations in Harrison's and McCarthy's were more antagonistic than elsewhere does not diminish the value of studying them in detail; on the contrary, it is what makes them most interesting: it is in these factories that the factors underlying the general hostility between the NUTGW and the ITGWU are most apparent. Certainly, if religious and political conflict was a factor which contributed to the perpetuation of inter-union hostilities, then one can be fairly sure that these factories would have been the 'storm centres'; after all, McCarthy's was the factory which was most closely identified with the Protestant community, and, as we have seen, there had already been an element of sectarian conflict in Harrison's. I will begin with the latter.

Miss McMorris felt that relations between members of the NUTGW and ITGWU were probably coloured by political differences; she told me

Aye, well... they didn't say it out [loud] but like 'she's in the other union'; it [the NUTGW] was always called 'the other union' as if it had horns on it! [laughter] And, like they weren't with Stephen McGonagle. Whether the fact that we were all in Dublin or not; and maybe it had psychologically, maybe it had you know. You don't know because... it seemed to be in Northern Ireland like it was our side - like it was awful when you think about life - and your side. We [Catholics and Protestants] were split long before this trouble started.

However, she thought that the most important factor underlying the persistence of inter-union hostility was competition for members. At the end of the 1954 dispute, the NUTGW had only five members in a workforce of up to 500, but Miss Gallagher was actively recruiting new members. This was something which ITGWU activists strongly resented, Miss McMorris told me:

The Tailor and Garment [Union] man always came in for some of them [Harrison's workers]. Aye, Kathy Gallagher was a shop steward, and there was a wee bit of mmmm. She tried to get as many. You were in with Kathy and somebody in with me, there was a wee bit of aggro there... she's trying to get her into her union. Them's now stupid, silly points and should never have been. But everybody was out to get as many into their own union... But you see the force would have been more the Irish Transport's because if we're all going to be stoppage they [the ITGWU] were the biggest part. They got the benefit, the Tailor and Garment's, then

this small number, got the benefits for us fighting it. It was only Stephen came oftener and it was through him that everybody benefited.

Miss Gallagher told me that she was routinely harassed on a Friday night when she was collecting subscriptions from NUTGW members:

You just stood with the box on a Friday night and you just tried to remember... and you just took it and you didn't always give them their card because you hadn't the time and if you had produced a card, it would cause a row... maybe Stephen's shop steward was the foot of the stairs and... they were a militant type and a rough type and they would call out 'I hope your not paying Kathy Gallagher up there.' I had to go through all that.

It was in McCarthy's that the most serious inter-union conflict took place. Although most of the women employed in McCarthy's were Protestants, there were a few Catholics. The NUTGW was the majority union, but the ITGWU had a few members. The ITGWU shop steward was a Protestant woman, I shall call her Mrs Ferguson, but most ITGWU members were Catholics. There was some friction between members of the NUTGW and ITGWU in the 1950s, but not much: the minutes of the NUTGW record one incident of alleged intimidation (Minutes:29 March 1955). Notwithstanding the fact that the ITGWU was recognised by the SMF, McCarthy's management did not recognise Mrs Ferguson as a bona fide shop steward. This does not seem to have presented any problems while ITGWU membership in the factory was small, but by 1962 the union had 100 members, and they demanded that their shop steward be recognised. Management refused, ITGWU members struck, and NUTGW members continued working.

A considerable amount of ill-feeling was generated during the strike. Mrs Henderson claimed that she took 'an awful lot [of abuse] that time, they [the pickets] threw pennies at me.' Mary recalled that the picketing was vigorous but orderly. There is no doubt that the ill-feeling between the strikers and the women who continued working had a sectarian element. Mary thought that the 'scabs' who broke the strike did so because they were 'loyalists.' Conversely, Mrs Henderson told me

Well, I dare say there was quite a bit of it [sectarian feeling] because I remember there was two girls from the Creggan - we called them the black and white minstrels for one had her hair blond and the other was jet black and we used to call them the black and white minstrels - and

Willie Simpson [pseudonym], I remember he was the manager of the department then, and Willie [Simpson] was standing outside the gate with me [laughs] and these two came down... and says, 'look at him, big yellow streak down his back,' and, 'Orange Bastard!' [laughs] and him an Orange [laughs].' And Willie Simpson never put a sash on him after it. I mind that, that sort of thing was brought into it. Now I'm only telling you that to let you know what way they thought. And Willie Simpson turned on his heel and [laughs] went out into the yard and his face: he was raging. They called him an Orange B, then they said, 'you've a big yellow streak down your back Willie and you an Orange man.' And everybody remarked on it [laughs], everybody was watching the parades after. I looked for it myself just to see. Manys a time I've told him after it... 'you're as yellow as they come.' I remember the two black and white minstrels giving it to Willie outside the gate, so the thought was there - they got their wee dig in about it.

Quinn also detected a sectarian element in the dispute, but he said that it went 'both ways, in fairness, sectarianism wasn't one-way traffic in Northern Ireland.'

However, judging by Mrs Henderson's recollections, the women who crossed the ITGWU picket line did not do so spontaneously. She described arriving at the factory on the morning that the strike began to find McGonagle and Quinn blocking the entrance and the workers standing outside uncertain about what to do. She told me that she walked through the crowd, pushed her way past McGonagle and Quinn, and went into the factory; most of the workers followed her. When Mrs Henderson got into work she found that dockers and carters had embargoed the factory. She saw to it that the embargo was lifted:

They stopped the cloth coming in and Mr Lowry [the general manager] sent for me... [McGonagle had] went down to the Transport and General Workers' Union and he told them that there was a strike on and they'd have to stop it [ie embargo the factory]. Well, the man in it [the ATGWU] didn't realise it was the Irish Transport [Union who were on strike], and he thought it was the Tailor and Garments [NUTGW] had called the strike. So Lowry, he sent for me and I says, 'just a minute,' so I rang yer man Hamill, George Hamill, and I said to George, 'do you know,' he said, 'what's happened,' I said, 'you'd better get the cloth up here, there's no strike in McCarthy's Factory,' and they sacked the boy from it. He was blacklisted - the boy that called the strike, [embargoed] the material going into the factory -... by Hamill, because he'd no business to do it. So I mean the cloth came in and everything just went on from that then on.

With cloth coming into the factory and most of the employees working, the strikers were unable to press their demand; the strike ended after a week.

'Scabbing' is not an activity which one would expect a committed trade unionist to engage in, and Mrs Henderson was aware that her role in the McCarthy's strike might appear incongruous, but she had no doubts about the correctness of her actions: she opposed the strike because she regarded it as part of an ongoing competition for members between the NUTGW and ITGWU, and as yet another example of McGonagle's unscrupulous behaviour. She told me that Mrs Ferguson had been her predecessor as NUTGW shop steward in McCarthy's, and that McGonagle had made her an ITGWU shop steward after she had been expelled from the NUTGW for defaulting with union subscriptions. In Mrs Henderson's opinion:

Stephen used her, when he realised he was cemented down out at the office on the Strand Road he... was out then for to take as many as he could from the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union]... he wanted into McCarthy's, that was his main [aim], he wanted into McCarthy's... [McGonagle] knew - I'm sure he scrutinised her before he asked her at all [to be an ITGWU steward] - what happened when she came out of the Tailor and Garment Workers'.

Mrs Henderson had a profound distrust of the ease with which McGonagle combined an anti-partitionist outlook with a readiness to compromise with Unionists. She alleged that he played more than one 'tune' depending on who he was dealing with[>], alluded to the fact that he accepted the job of Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in the 1970's (see Appendix 1), and then told me

that's why I... [had] the row you see: that he used Mrs Ferguson against me because he couldn't get, it was very few Protestants that went with him. And that's what angered me with him: that I knew he was using her, because he shouldn't have touched her in the first place. If he'd one or two [Protestant members in McCarthy's] it would be the height of it... Mrs Ferguson was the first and she snatched at it... because she was out to get the Tailor and Garment's at that time... they [the NUTGW] didn't expose her... but... I think she didn't want to lose touch with the union, I think she just wanted to be able to say 'I'm a shop steward,' But the firm didn't entertain her at all.

To a traditional Irish marxist this episode might look suspiciously like yet another case of employers manipulating

divisions between workers into sectarian channels. After all, McCarthy's management was reputed (see section 4.4) to have had a sectarian employment policy and the strike was caused by their refusal to recognise an ITGWU shop steward. In such a scenario, Mrs Henderson's role would be that of the Protestant trade unionist who placed loyalty to fellow Protestants in management above solidarity with a group of mainly Catholic workers who had a legitimate grievance. And, it is true that Mrs Henderson expressed an appreciation of the management's predicament:

They [management] objected very much to her [Mrs Ferguson] interfering with it. They said it was alright, they accepted me, but they would not accept her in the Irish Transport... she didn't know anything about work study because I remember Mr Lowry telling me she... I can't remember just [what] the saying was now, but she was using the wrong words in the work studies and he says, 'I couldn't talk to a woman like that Martha,' he says, 'I wouldn't get very far.'

In reality, however, Mrs Henderson had little sympathy with the managers in McCarthy's. During the first interview which I conducted with Mrs Henderson she prefaced her account of the ITGWU strike with the comment, 'I seen me threaten to close down the factory manys a time', and with a story to illustrate her readiness to use the threat of strike action against management. In my third interview with Mrs Henderson, she summed-up her attitude to trade unionism and industrial relations by saying: '[we would have been] working for nothing but for the union... a worker had to fight to get a decent living.' Moreover, one of her main reasons for leaving McCarthy's factory in the early 1970s was that she found Willie Simpson - the manager whom the strikers called an 'Orange bastard' - insufferable (see Appendix 1). Thus, perhaps the management's refusal to recognise the ITGWU had a political or sectarian component, Mary certainly thought that it had, but Mrs Morgan was not their puppet.

On the basis of these two cases - Harrison's and McCarthy's - it can be said that political differences and, occasionally, sectarian antagonisms played a part in perpetuating inter-union hostility. However, the main factor underlying these antagonism was an ongoing competition for members. In the latter respect the inter-union rivalry between activists in the NUTGW and ITGWU in Derry was similar to the rivalry and conflict which usually results when different

unions seek to organise the same group of workers. As Lerner (1961: 66) points out, it is precisely because of the frequency 'jurisdictional disputes' that the British Trade Union Congress evolved a body of 'parliamentary and case rules', of which the best known is the Bridlington Agreement, to regulate the relations between 'unions which claimed the right to organise the same group of workers.' Unlike unions in Britain, the rivalry between the NUTGW and ITGWU was unchecked: until 1959 they were affiliated to different trade union congresses - it was a free-for-all.

At this point it is instructive to contrast relations between the ITGWU and NUTGW in Derry with relations between the ITGWU and ATGWU. Shirt cutters were differentiated such that those who were members of the ATGWU tended to be Protestant and those who joined the ITGWU tended to be Catholic. Moreover, in July 1953 ATGWU members in the docks embargoed a factory for two weeks until the breakaway union agreed to return two shirt cutters who had defected from the ATGWU to the CWU (DJ: 24 July 1953 and LS: 27 July 1953). Yet this rivalry did not persist after the CWU merged with the ITGWU. One of the main reasons for this was that, although the ATGWU and ITGWU belonged to separate trade union congresses, the two unions had a national agreement designed to obviate inter-union rivalry (DJ: 30 November 1953 and 4 December 1953).

Having explored the nature of inter-union rivalry and hostility, I now wish to examine its effects on the development of trade unionism in the industry during the 1950s and 1960s. There are two different kinds of question to be considered. One is whether or not the hostility between the ITGWU and NUTGW, especially the latter's policy of not recognising the former, adversely affected the ability of officials and activists to secure their members' interests? The other is: what was the outcome of the competition for members between the NUTGW and the ITGWU? (9) The first question will be discussed in the next section; here I will be concerned only with the second.

In April 1954, the division between the NUTGW and the ITGWU had a sectarian dimension: the former was a British based union with a mainly Protestant membership, and the latter was an Irish based union

with a mainly Catholic membership. There is no doubt that, given the religious segregation between factories, inter-union hostility, in itself, tended to reproduce this pattern: NUTGW activists were free to organise without ITGWU intervention only in those factories where the workforce was predominantly Protestant; likewise, ITGWU activists were free to organise without NUTGW intervention only in those factories where the workforce was mainly Catholic. Moreover, the fact that each union had become identified as being 'British' or 'Irish' made them less attractive to shirt workers who did share the national identity of the union concerned. As we have seen most Protestants who had supported the breakaway defected when it merged with the ITGWU. And Miss Gallagher told me that some Catholic workers in Harrison's factory refused to join the NUTGW because they preferred to join an Irish union; others joined without demur but left the next day because they would 'go home and their fathers would tell them, "you should be paying into Dublin."'

If anything, these problems were greater for the NUTGW than for the ITGWU; after all the latter had a much larger membership to start with. In April 1954, the ITGWU organised about 3,500 of the 7,000 or so women employed in the industry; that is, roughly 50% of the workforce. The NUTGW organised only 150, or 2%, of the workforce. Moreover, the ITGWU was administered by a popular, dynamic, local official together with a group of experience union activists. The NUTGW was administered by a Branch Committee which was composed of a succession of officials imported from outside the area and a group of women who had had no previous experience of union work, and which was, as we have seen, riven by internal rivalries. Yet, despite these organisational disadvantages and the decline in the numbers employed in the shirt industry during the 1960s, the officials and activists of the NUTGW succeeded in rebuilding their organisation such that by the late 1960s NUTGW membership in Derry stood at between 800 and 1,000 (see Table 8), nearly 20% of the total workforce which then numbered approximately 5,000. Table 8 indicates an even more remarkable change: McCarthy's, the factory most closely identified with the Protestant community, remained the 'cornerstone' of NUTGW organisation in the late 1960s, but the union now had a large membership in Tillie and Henderson's and Harrison's, factories

which had predominantly Catholic workforces. In other words, the NUTGW maintained and increased its base among Protestant workers and succeeded in attracting a significant number of Catholics.

Comparable figures are not available for the ITGWU, but it is possible to estimate that its share of the workforce declined to about 2,000 members in the late 1960s; that is, roughly 40% of the workforce²⁹. The oral evidence regarding the religious composition of the ITGWU is somewhat contradictory, but it seems that, although ITGWU officials and activists were less successful at recruiting Protestants than NUTGW officials and activists were at recruiting Catholics, some Protestant did join the ITGWU during the 1960s.

Miss Gallagher admitted that the ITGWU recruited some Protestant members; she told me about a Protestant shop steward in Hunter's factory who had supported the breakaway and had become a member of the ITGWU:

Whatever grip McGonagle had on her she would not give up, she would not give up [her membership of the ITGWU]. And manys a [public] meeting we were [at] and she got up and opposed me and was very bitter about me and everything. A couple of them [Protestant shirt workers] [were] like that... and we could never understand them.

But she claimed that,

As time went on, the Protestants then - because the Catholics came out with this thing 'it's [the NUTGW] a British based union,' you see, 'and you should have nothing to do with it' - and the Protestants sort of looked at it both ways and started thinking, 'the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union]'... The few of them [Protestants] were very bitter [against the NUTGW] but in the end they must have seen the light because the same person who was working in Hunter's and when Lily [the NUTGW shop steward] or them were off [work] or not lifing the union [dues] she was lifting it for them. And she ended up - before she retired out of Hunter's - she ended up being the one... to see that the [Tailor and Garment Workers'] union was kept in... there was a couple of Protestants very bitter, but they came round.

Mrs Henderson claimed that following the failure of the strike in McCarthy's, ITGWU organisation in the factory collapsed. This was confirmed by Quinn, and by Mary. The latter told me that she never went back to the factory after the strike. She alleged that the strikers were made redundant 'one by one', and, having anticipated this, she 'didn't give them the chance': instead of going

back to work in McCarthy's she 'signed on the sick' and found a job in another factory. Quinn, however, claimed that he had more success in the Ebrington factory, the other large factory which was identified with the Protestant community. And I met two retired Protestant shirt workers who spoke enthusiastically about McGonagle's abilities as a union official. One, Saidie, who had worked in several different shirt factories during her career indicated that she had, depending on the factory, been a member of both the NUTGW and the ITGWU, and told me that she,

couldn't say a word about Stephen McGonagle, because one of the times I was working in the Black Bear [Factory] and I was doing neck bands and I wasn't really paid for them - they were in twelfths, there was more tickets than enough - we were in with Stephen McGonagle at that time too, and right enough he got me a bit of a rise. '10'

Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson explained their success in recruiting Catholic as well as Protestant workers in a number of different ways. Mrs Henderson told me that

a lot of Catholics wanted a British based union. It's like... quite a few Catholics have British passports, and others have Irish passports.

Miss Gallagher told me that her task was made easier because she was friendly with the supervisor in the training department:

she told me so many [new workers] was coming and she always gave them a pep talk and... I usually had most of the training room: [I] went over and organised them straight away, and oncst you got them you kept them.

But both women claimed that their success reflected the fact that the NUTGW was, in Mrs Henderson's words, 'the union which really got them [the workers] their [wage] increases', and stressed the hard graft of dealing with individual workers' grievances. For example, Miss Gallagher told me that she built NUTGW membership in Harrison's from 5 in April 1954 to 170 in the late 1960s by

Gradual hard working and people hearing [about you] and cases [grievances] being handled. And maybe someone was in no union and we would turn around and do something for them and then a couple of others would join the union. We would say we'd have to all be in it [the union] because there was some of them in no union for a long time within that period [the 1950s and 1960s]; they just decided that they weren't paying the Irish Transport, and then they didn't come to us for a long time... you just had to work at it.

When you juxtapose the latter quote with Saidie's remark in the

previous paragraph it would appear that in many workers' minds, the national identity of a union was less important than the fact of its officials and shop stewards being prepared to represent their day to day interests as factory workers.

To sum up. Although both unions were able to break out of the 'sectarian ghetto', the NUTGW was more successful at attracting Catholics than the ITGWU was at attracting Protestants; moreover, the proportion of the workforce organised by the ITGWU declined significantly between 1954 and the late 1960s. Miss Cosgrave and Miss Gallagher told me that this was because ITGWU organisation was generally less effective in the 1960s than it had been in the 1950s. Both women thought that McGonagle increasingly left the day to day running of the Derry Branch of the ITGWU to Quinn and, in Miss Gallagher's words, 'Seamus [Quinn] let things slip.' It is true that Quinn took charge of the Branch in the 1960s; he told me that

It was a gradual process. He [McGonagle] was looking after Donegal and then he was elected to the Executive of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions... it ended up with me looking after Derry... he was still in charge technically.

It is impossible to determine whether or not Quinn 'let things slip' in comparison to McGonagle; what can be said is that, of the two, Quinn was more conciliatory towards his counterparts in the NUTGW. Both this, and, to some extent, the changing disposition of the two unions in Derry must be seen in the context of the gradual amelioration in inter-union relations which took place in the 1960s. It is to this that I now turn.

7.4 Inter-Union Accommodation

The amelioration in relations between members of the NUTGW and of the ITGWU began at official level, and the impetus for it came from changes in the institutional structure of the wider trade union movement, namely the formation of the ICTU in 1959. I will therefore begin this section by reviewing inter-union relations at official level, and explaining the significance of the formation of the ICTU.

We have seen that the NUTGW pursued a policy of not recognising the ITGWU and that the principle manifestation of this policy was that representatives of the NUTGW refused to sit with their ITGWU counterparts in negotiations with the local employers. This was a serious matter, for although the parameters for wage movements in the shirt industry were layed down by the Northern Ireland Shirtmaking Wages Council the implementation of changes in wages and conditions required detailed negotiations between the unions, the SMF, and particular employers (see Liberty: July 1958). Nevertheless, there were, as I mentioned in the last section, surprisingly few disagreements between the two unions in this area, and the rivalry between activists on the shop floor does not seem to have adversely affected wage bargaining. In part, this lack of disagreement reflects the fact that there were, in Quinn's words, 'no policy differences' between the two unions. To be sure, there were rhetorical differences. On the one hand, NUTGW officials and activists, emphasised the strength that accrued to their Branch from its association with the NUTGW in Britain. For example, Ollis was quoted in the Derry Journal (DJ: 11 April 1955; see also DJ: 20 April 1956) as saying:

In pursuance of... [NUTGW] policy in Northern Ireland of parity with Britain... custom and practice ordain that increases must first be obtained across the water, therefore the prospects of an increase for Northern Ireland workers are dependent on the union's efforts in Britain

On the other hand, ITGWU officials and activists tended to present British workers as rivals: McGonagle is quoted in Liberty (May 1956) as saying:

Our staple industry, the shirt industry, is one which operates on an incentive basis... therefore only with improved techniques in production and methods of payment can we hold our own in this highly competitive industry against our rivals in Britain.

However, in reality, the officials of both unions were committed to the existing wage bargaining process whereby the wages in Derry factories were based on the minimum rates set by the Northern Ireland Shirtmaking Wages Council which were, in turn, based on, though significantly lower than, minimum rates set by the Shirtmaking Wages Council in Britain. Macgougan and McGonagle were both members of the Northern Ireland Wages Council, and they never let their personal enmity get in the way of wage negotiations. According to Macgougan

the two unions did

Not make a common cause [at Wages Council], we would put the policies down, take it or leave it [clap of hands], of course once he [McGonagle] got his organisation they did follow on, supported our motions all the time, never tried any tricks at Wages Council, but the first time [reference to the difference over holiday pay which was one of the reasons given by McGonagle for resigning from the NUTGW]... the difference between the two applications 2/52nds and 2/50ths with loss of guarantee, loss of flat rate - appalling. In other words a few shillings extra for the high fliers, with no fall back for the ordinary run-of-the-mill member, a complete negation of trade union principles.

Miss Cosgrave who represented the ITGWU at the Wages Council in the 1950s and early 1960s said of her experience,

There's one thing I must say in fairness to Jack McGuigan [sic], Macgougan, he would always voted with us at the Wages Council... if it went to a vote. But the girls in Derry never earned money 'till Stephen McGonagle went into fight for them.

Thus, Macgougan and McGonagle, both highly professional trade union officials, took care that the rift between the NUTGW and ITGWU did not adversely affect their members' interests. However, it was not until the formation of the ICTU that the two men decided that it was time, in Macgougan's words, 'to bury the hatchet.' Macgougan and McGonagle were keen supporters of the movement to unite the CIU and the ITUC, and each was involved in the negotiations which brought it about; indeed, Macgougan was chairman of what was called the 'Provisional United Organisation.' Both men saw rapprochement in Derry as the logical extension of their support for the ICTU. Moreover, once the ITGWU and NUTGW were affiliated to the same trade union congress, they became subject to a body of rules and conventions designed to control competition over membership (see McCarthy, 1977: chapter 11 passim). This undoubtedly provided an additional impetus towards rapprochement. For example, following the dispute in McCarthy's, Mrs Henderson was called to account by the ICTU. She described the 'hearing' in the following way:

I was taken up in front of them [the ICTU] for strike breaking. Jack Macgougan said, 'you're only here as an observer today,' I said, 'that's what you think!' And then [the ICTU officer] says, 'why did Stephen McGonagle have Mrs Ferguson? Why did he use her against Mrs Henderson?' And Jack Macgougan [said] 'well, it was one of these [things],' I said, 'excuse me Mr Chairman, I'll tell you the proper way of it.' And I just told him, and Stephen

McGonagle hadn't a word, he nearly died! I said 'he [McGonagle] used that girl against the Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union],' and I said, 'Stephen McGonagle [is] only a plumber [laughs]; Stephen McGonagle knows nothing really about the union business; the Tailor and Garment Workers' is unique, they cater only for the shirt industry; and as for Stephen McGonagle, he takes every Tom, Dick, and Harry: milk men, anything at all! [more laughs]' The chairman sat, and Jack Macgougan [said], 'oh my God, Martha,' I says, 'I'm telling the truth, youse [Macgougan and McGonagle] are sitting there covering up for one another; I don't believe in that.'... [They] never said a word to me, and I said, 'I'll do the same again Mr Chairman.'

Incidentally, the ICTU seems to have found in favour of Mrs Henderson: Mrs Henderson told me that she received 'a letter... that Stephen McGonagle said that until God took him he would never fight Martha Henderson again on a union matter.'

The 'burying of the hatchet' between the two unions was not a policy which was formally discussed by the two union Branches concerned and agreed at a joint meeting: it was an amorphous affair. Nevertheless, it can be traced in three developments which took place in the early 1960s. The first was the NUTGW's acceptance of an invitation from the SMF to attend talks about a wage application even though ITGWU representatives would be present (Minute: 23 August 1960). The second was the NUTGW's decision not to block the affiliation of the ITGWU to the Trades Council. The third was that the NUTGW participated, along with the ITGWU, the ATGWU, and the SMF, in the publication of a pamphlet on the threat to the Northern Ireland shirt industry posed by cheap imports from Asia (Guckian, 1963).

I will look at the first two decisions in more detail because they reveal the extent to which the 'burying of the hatchet' between the two unions emerged as the result of an initiative by Macgougan and McGonagle rather than due to an improvement in relationships between the local activists. The SMF's invitation to talks was prefigured by a letter from McGonagle to Macgougan in October 1959. In it, he suggested that all the trade unions organising in the Derry shirt industry should attempt to work out a common policy on wage negotiations with the SMF. Macgougan put the suggestion to the Branch Committee of his union; they rejected it. Miss Gallagher said

that the union had nothing to gain from such co-operation; Mrs Pollock said that it would have an adverse effect on the membership (Minute: 6 November 1959). The SMF issued a second invitation to talks in August 1960. On this occasion, after some encouragement from Macgougan, the Committee decided to send Miss Gallagher, Mrs Henderson, Macgougan, and Neill, the Branch secretary (Minute: 23 November 1960). It is perhaps significant that neither Miss Gallagher nor Mrs Pollock were at the meeting at which this decision was taken. At this time Miss Gallagher was, for the reasons discussed section 7.2, not attending Committee meetings, and Mrs Henderson was Branch president; although the latter was no less hostile to McGonagle and the ITGWU than the former she was more amenable to Macgougan's persuasion.

As I pointed out in the last chapter, the official trade union movement in Derry was strongly opposed to the introduction of the ITGWU to Derry and refused to permit the Branch to affiliate to the local Trades Council. In September 1961 members of the Derry Trades Council were informed that the Belfast Branch of the ITGWU would not affiliate to the Belfast Trades Council so long as the Derry Branch of the union was not permitted to affiliate to the Derry Trades Council. Delegates were asked to consult their union branches about the matter; the Derry Branch of the NUTGW agreed not to oppose the affiliation of the ITGWU to the Derry Trades Council (Minute: 3 October 1961). Miss Gallagher was dismayed:

I remember it ended up in the Belfast Telegraph with the Trades Council. He [McGonagle] wasn't on the Trades Council. I wasn't so active at this time, I was still active enough, but I didn't know what was going on, and then the next thing I heard was that Stephen was being accepted into the trade union [ie Trades Council] and that was the sorest point to me. Because like, they accepted him back and he never looked back from there, and I remember some of the reporters phoned me up to ask my views on it and I remember I gave him a whole mouthful: I told him what I thought and then when I looked in the Telegraph that night it was all in it. Then Macgougan was going to expel me from the union - you see there again we clashed - he was going to expel me for he said that I was speaking as an individual, which I was, [but] I worked hard enough for them [the union]. He then answered it which hurt me a lot... as much to say I stepped out of line.

There is no doubt that despite the initial reluctance of some NUTGW activists to recognise the ITGWU, and the ongoing competition for members in particular factories, the unfreezing of relations at official level fostered by Macgougan and McGonagle had a positive effect on the attitude of ITGWU and NUTGW activists to each other. Moreover, although NUTGW activists were worried that the formation of the ICTU might undermine the position of British based unions in Ireland, and expressed some concern about the effect which it might have on the situation in Derry (see Minutes: 10 January 1956 and 15 October 1957), it would seem that, once the ICTU was established, the fact that the NUTGW and ITGWU were affiliated to the same trade union congress also helped improve relations between activists. For example, Mrs Henderson described inter-union relations during the 1960s in the following way: 'there was still that wee bit [of antagonism] there [in the 1960s], but nothing compared to what it was in the early 1950s.' I asked 'Why did relations improve?' She replied:

Oh, well when we went into the Trade ah Congress [ICTU] and things you had to be with them [ITGWU representatives] because they were there, you were a London based union, but if you went down to Dublin, or Malihide, or Greystones you were affiliated with them, you just had to, things went to a bloc vote... I've had to travel with Stephen McGonagle to meetings that he was at, even to Belfast and that, I have travelled with him in a car and have lifted so many of us to - it saved them paying out fares... you travelled with them [ITGWU members].

Miss McMorris also commented on the positive effect of common involvement in the ICTU on relations between NUTGW and ITGWU activists:

When we became the Irish Transport and General Workers' [Union] I would only [have] met the representatives of the other union at Wages Council or at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions or something like that in Belfast where you would go up. That's how Francis [Maguire, Belfast based women's officer of the NUTGW from 1963] got to know us... we're all chummy. When we met we were like just part of one family. There was one [congress] then in Bundoran, all the unions represented, they mixed socially, there'd be no problem... I imagine even if you went to any part of England if you were a union member, your whole idea would be the same thing; how could you be different?... you might get extremists... you see in England there it's bigger... when your looking at Derry or Belfast, it's as far as we can see in union. '''

Quinn did not regard the formation of the ICTU as the watershed in the development of a modus vivendi between the NUTGW and ITGWU in Derry. He put greater emphasis on new

personalities... the advent of Billy Lindsay [NUTGW Branch secretary from 1963] and people who weren't involved in the breakaway, and I wasn't involved in the breakaway as such and we came together.

In practice this coming together involved, 'agreement... that he wouldn't take any members or go into any factories I was in and that I would do the same.' Obviously, Quinn has a vested interest in claiming the credit for the amelioration in relations between the members of the two unions, but there is a considerable amount of evidence to support his suggestion that the advent of new officials and activists who had not been involved in the breakaway contributed to the amelioration of inter-union relations.

One of the implications of Quinn's suggestion is that Macgougan and McGonagle, the old adversaries, were no longer involved in the day to day affairs of their respective union Branches. It is true, as I mentioned in the last section, McGonagle was less and less involved in local union affairs during the latter part of the 1960s. Macgougan too was less involved in the Derry scene than he had previously been: following the conflicts of the 1950s Macgougan had grown to dislike Derry, and once Billy Lindsay had established himself as Branch secretary Macgougan was glad to leave local matters to him. Macgougan told me that his favourite view of Derry was through 'the rear view mirror of my car' - quite a change from the newly appointed trade union official of 1945 who spoke so enthusiastically about the potential for union organisation in the city, and who was so struck by the unemployment, poor housing, and poverty which he found there that he wrote The Londonderry Air (1948).

Mrs Henderson's experience and recollections supports Quinn's view in various ways. Firstly, although she was prepared to accept a lift in McGonagle's car she was never able to establish a co-operative relationship with him,

He spoke and all that, but I never had very much time for him. I passed myself with him but I never got real friends with him.

In contrast she told me that

Quinn was alright. I didn't have any, much, argument with him. I sort-of respected him as a union man, but not Stephen McGonagle, I've no time for him at all. But I had nothing against thing-we [Quinn]. We worked with him; we talked about things and that, because we've been to vice-versa with employers him and I.

Secondly, she told me,

Lindsay and him [Quinn] got on, in fact, I think they had tête-à-têtes between themselves, the two of them. Of course I suppose that's [to be expected]... but I don't think Macgougan would have approved of it, because I don't think Jack ever got over what McGonagle did. Willie [Lyndsay] wasn't in the picture [when the breakaway took place] and didn't know [about] it.

If she was referring to personal relations, then Mrs Henderson is correct when she says that Macgougan never 'got over what McGonagle did', but Macgougan did come to terms with McGonagle on a professional level. Moreover, Macgougan was aware of Lindsay and Quinn's informal arrangement, and accepted it: he told me that Lindsay and Quinn established 'unofficial spheres of influence.'

Of all my respondents, Miss Gallagher was the least positive about inter-union relation in the 1960s. Eventually, she accepted her union's recognition of the ITGWU and was prepared to 'sit with' its members, but she was ever on her guard:

We got to a stage where we had to sit [with ITGWU representatives at meetings]... it [the mutual antagonism] gradually broke-down, because I remember some of the education meetings that was called, Seamus Quinn was in them. They used to be held up here in the park in the [indistinct] institute. I remember having to go. It was like a red rag to a bull going to the meeting: Seamus was going to be there and you had to watch that you made a good contribution to it, that you didn't let him do the talking, and, like, as much to say that he was representing the garment workers.

She was appreciative of the fact that McGonagle and Macgougan were not involved in local affairs in the 1960s, but was not much more amenable to Quinn than she had been to them: she told me that she still felt, 'a wee bit of prejudice there, I always shyed of him [Quinn]: I thought he was behind the scenes all the time the strife [around the time of the breakaway] was going on.'

For Miss Gallagher, inter-union relations only improved significantly following a major upheaval in Harrison's factory. By

the late 1960s Harrison's, McCarthy's, and the Rosemount factories had been acquired by the Viyella group of companies (see section 2.4). Viyella began to rationalise production in the early 1970s: workers in Harrison's were given the opportunity to take jobs in the Rosemount factory, and in 1973 Harrison's city centre factory was shut down and production was moved to a new factory in an industrial estate on the Waterside. Although these changes occurred after the period with which I am concerned, it is worth examining why, from Miss Gallagher's point of view, they led to an improvement in inter-union relations because what she has to say tends to support what Quinn told me about the advent of new personalities and the development of what Macgougan called 'unofficial spheres of influence.'

Three ITGWU shop stewards with whom Miss Gallagher found relations particularly difficult left Harrison's during the upheaval. She described two of these women as her 'arch enemies.' One of them took early retirement, the other transferred to the Rosemount factory; the third woman - Miss McMorris - also transferred to Rosemount. With these three women gone, Miss Gallagher found that inter-union rivalry diminished. Several of the women with whom Miss Gallagher worked were members of the ITGWU, one, whom she called Peggy, was quite friendly. The other ITGWU women used to give Peggy their union dues and ask her for help if they had any problems, 'well Peggy would ask my advice... it worked out like that in the end.'¹² Moreover, Miss Gallagher and the new senior ITGWU shop steward, I shall call her Lily, came to an agreement about recruitment: Miss Gallagher summed up the improvement in inter-union relations in Harrison's in the following way,

That antagonism with the union was dying out... Stephen's shop stewards then, the Irish Transport [Union], we were more kind of friendly, and then... out in the new factory, the majority of the Irish Transport were in the finishing end, that's the laundry - you know, the dressing end of it - well then I had more on the floor... we took it that then the laundry's the Irish Transport... I wouldn't have [tried to organise there], like maybe if they [new workers] came in [to the laundry] I'd have said, 'it's up to you [which union you choosel,' and then... Lily - she was Stephen's shop steward - she would say, 'well, she's coming in with me.' We got to the stage where we respected that... I wouldn't [have tried to organise a woman] if she was in the laundry unless she came to me. One or two of them did come

to me, but they'd be maybe the Protestants... well, then Lily and I got an understanding that she wouldn't oppose that.

7.5 Conclusion

The history of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry throughout the 1950s and for much of the 1960s is a history of factiousness and rivalry not just between the ITGWU and the NUTGW but within the latter. Contrary to what traditional Irish marxism would lead us to expect neither the inter-union nor the intra-union conflict originated in sectarian differences. The conflict within the NUTGW arose out of two interlinked struggles for power and influence, and the rivalry between the NUTGW and ITGWU arose out of an ongoing competition for membership: the same kinds of tension which have caused, and continue to cause, conflict within and between trade unions elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry was no more susceptible to such tensions than trade unionism elsewhere. As I noted in the previous chapter, labour historians and industrial sociologists have long recognised that conflict such as that which beset the Derry Branch of the NUTGW is inherent in trade union government. Similarly, as I noted in third section of this chapter (section 7.3), Lerner (1961) has shown that when two trade unions claim the right to organise the same group of workers - as was the case with the NUTGW and ITGWU in Derry - bitter conflict often follows. Intra-union and inter-union conflicts in Derry were, perhaps, unusual insofar as they tended to generate and, in turn be exacerbated by, divisions of a political, and, occasionally, sectarian nature. However, even in this respect trade union conflict in the Derry shirt industry was not so very unusual. Lerner (1961: 100), in her study of the secession of a section of the London membership of the NUTGW in the 1930s, notes that

Certain religio-ethnic differences existed between London and Leeds. In London, the non-Jewish members were usually Protestants; in Leeds there existed a large Catholic minority. Since Conley, Loughlin, and Sullivan were Catholics and were identified with the Leeds national headquarters, the national office was regarded by many members as being Catholic controlled. The identification

was never raised to a rational level, but rather was an emotional identification, a feeling.

It is difficult to judge the extent to which all this strife had an adverse effect on trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry. After all, it is impossible to know how things would have turned out had not the Derry Branch of the NUTGW seceded in 1952. What can be said is that inter-union conflict did not significantly inhibit union officials and activists from performing their main role: defending their members' interests vis-à-vis the employers. Indeed, on the evidence presented in this chapter, it could be argued that the competition between the two unions for members made officials and activists more conscientious about taking up their members', and potential members', grievances than would otherwise have been the case. Moreover, during all my research I came across only one episode in which the split between the NUTGW and ITGWU may have had an adverse effect on workers' industrial interests. In 1981, Viyella closed one of their Derry factories - the Rocolla factory situated in the Creggan estate; many of the workers were made redundant, and some protested against the closure by occupying the factory (see AP/RN 26 November 1981). I interviewed one of the women who was involved in the occupation. She told me that the leaders of the occupation sought support from workers in other local factories which were owned by Viyella - that is, McCarthy's and Harrison's - but that the forthcoming support was 'not great'. She felt that this was because the other two factories were members of a different trade union: the Rocolla factory was organised by the ITGWU, McCarthy's and Harrison's were mainly organised by the NUTGW⁽¹³⁾.

Inter-union rivalry may not have had an adverse effect on collective bargaining, but it did have the effect of, in Rolston's terminology, reconstituting sectarian divisions within trade unionism: in the mid 1950s the ITGWU was a mainly Catholic organisation, the NUTGW a mainly Protestant organisation, and activists in both unions sought to prevent the other from expanding. However, this pattern of, to use another of Rolston's phrases, 'sectarian trade unionism' did not last. To be sure, the ITGWU remained a mainly Catholic organisation, but it attracted some Protestants, and the NUTGW attracted significant numbers of Catholics

and Protestants. Moreover, the main factor underlying these changes was that which Rolston dismisses: the self-consciously non-sectarian activity of trade union activists and officials.

Thus, trade union activists and officials in the Derry shirt industry revealed a capacity to accommodate conflicting identities and interests. NUTGW activists found a way of, in Miss Gallagher's words, 'agreeing to differ' among themselves, and there was a gradual and uneven rapprochement between them and their counterparts in the ITGWU. It is worth pointing out that my analysis of the rapprochement between the NUTGW and the ITGWU contradicts another aspect of Rolston's argument. Rolston presents the unification of the CIU and ITUC as an essentially meaningless institutional arrangement, but I have shown that it provided the initial impetus for rapprochement between the NUTGW and ITGWU, and some of my respondents felt that common membership of the ICTU was a significant aspect in the amelioration of inter-union relations. However, Rolston tacitly acknowledges that trade unionism in Northern Ireland was capable of accommodating members with different religious and political identities; indeed, one of his main arguments is that it was precisely this kind of accommodation which resulted in the political emasculation of the trade union movement; I will examine this aspect of his argument further in the first section of the next, and concluding, chapter.

CHAPTER 8: TRADE UNIONISM AND SECTARIANISM IN THE DERRY SHIRT INDUSTRY 1920-1968: AN HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

In this study I have been concerned with the effect of sectarianism on the development of trade unionism. I elaborated this problem and my approach to it in contradistinction to the theories of trade unionism to be found in the literature on Northern Ireland. According to the predominant theory, developed most cogently by traditional Irish marxists, trade unionism was thwarted by sectarianism. In chapter one I suggested that this theory had more to do with the preconceptions of its authors than with social reality. I showed that the traditional Irish marxist view of trade unionism was based on reductionist and evolutionist assumptions, and argued that the relationship between trade unionism and sectarianism might be better understood with an approach in which it is recognised, first, that trade unionism and sectarianism, like other social institutions, are produced, reproduced, and changed through the actions of actual individuals; second, that while individuals constitute society they are simultaneously constituted by society; and third, that attention must be given to the meanings ascribed by individuals to their actions and predicaments.

My main purpose in this chapter is to assess the results of applying this approach in the case of the Derry shirt industry. There are, however, a set of outstanding issues which must first be addressed. One of the attractions of the theoretical approach which I outlined in chapter one is that by insisting that the relationship between action and structure should be understood as process in time it offers the possibility of uniting anthropology and sociology with history (see Abrams, 1982: xv). In chapter two I situated my study in relation to the years 1920 and 1968: both years were political

turning points, and they delimit a particular era in the history of Derry and of Ireland. The significance of 1920 is that it was the year in which the legislative framework for the partition of Ireland was introduced; and in chapter three I discussed the effect of the political and military struggle between Unionists and nationalists in Derry on the shirt cutters' strike and its aftermath. The significance of 1968 is that it was the year in which the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) emerged as a mass movement, and my thesis would not be historically complete without some consideration of the impact of civil rights protests on trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry. After all, Derry was the 'crucible' (Purdie, 1987: 1) or 'main arena' (Curran, 1986: 55) of the protests. The CRM was the first effective challenge to the sectarian structure of Northern Irish society and politics: it was a new and progressive social movement. In considering its impact on trade unionism in the shirt industry we are therefore confronted with a question which lies at the heart of the traditional Irish marxist thesis, and which I have so far - deliberately - neglected: the question of the relationship between trade unionism and progressive politics. The reader may recall that traditional Irish marxists judge the trade union movement in Northern Ireland as a failure because it did not give rise to a viable socialist or progressive politics. I argued that this was the wrong criterion: once the evolutionist and reductionist assumptions of traditional Irish marxism are abandoned it becomes apparent that there is no necessary connection between trade unionism and socialist or progressive politics. Nevertheless, the substantive issues raised by the traditional marxists concerning the relationship between trade unionism and progressive politics in Northern Ireland, and the alleged failure of the trade union movement to confront religious inequality are important ones, and I will focus my discussion of trade unionism in the shirt industry and the CRM around them.

8.2 Trade Unionism in the Derry Shirt Industry, Socialist Politics, and the CRM: the End of an Era

I discussed the political history of Derry at some length in section 2.2; here I only wish to refresh the reader's memory. The stalemate between Unionism and nationalism which characterised politics in Derry - and, indeed, the rest of Northern Ireland - after 1920 began to breakdown in the early 1960s when a series of government decisions combined to create an unprecedented degree of common purpose between Catholics and Protestants in the city. Particularly important in this respect was the decision to locate the New University of Ulster at Coleraine rather than Derry. The 'University for Derry Action Committee' attracted support from both the Unionist and Nationalist Parties but it was led by John Hume who, according to most commentators, represented a new strand in Northern Irish politics: young, moderate, middle-class Catholics who rejected the Nationalist Party's exclusive emphasis on the border, and believed in the possibility of reform within Northern Ireland. However, following the failure of the university campaign the political initiative was taken by people with a more radical outlook. The radicals included members of the 'Derry Young Republican Association' and of the Derry Branch of the NILP who shared the conviction that Protestant and Catholic workers could be united on a class basis in opposition to their conservative masters - Unionist and nationalist, North and South. The 'quasi-marxist' rhetoric (Purdie, 1987: 26) of the young radicals was novel in Derry in the 1960s, but they focused on the two most deeply felt and long-standing grievances of Catholics in Derry: male unemployment and housing shortages. It was their campaign against poor housing conditions which attracted the most support. A Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC) was formed early in 1968, and it was this Committee which invited the NICRA to march in Derry on 5 October. Police over-reaction to the march turned the NICRA into a mass movement, and a series of marches took place in Derry during the autumn of 1968. In so far as this activity was organised, it was by the Derry Citizens Action Committee (DCAC) not the radical left. The DCAC was a cautious body composed of moderate Catholics and Protestants. It had a dual purpose: to take the political initiative away from the

radicals and to ensure that protest marches did not get out of hand. It was quite successful in both respects, but it was unable to prevent the deterioration in relations between Protestants and Catholics in Derry which, according to Curran (1986: 108), became increasingly marked following the march by members of Peoples Democracy (PD) from Belfast to Derry in January 1969. The PD was a student based organisation which had close links with the radical left in Derry. The march, as the organisers expected, was attacked by loyalists en route, and their arrival in Derry triggered a police riot in the Bogside.

None of the unions which had members in the Derry shirt industry formally supported the CRM. On the afternoon of 18 November 1968 approximately 1,000 Catholic women shirtmakers abandoned their work to defy a government ban on marches through the city centre. Eamonn McCann, one of the most prominent of the radicals, estimated that there were 'up to 19 separate marches' involving women shirtmakers. The marchers included many union members - not just of the ITGWU but also of the British based NUTGW. However, neither union sanctioned the strike. Indeed, it would seem that the CRM and the issues which it raised were never even discussed by the Derry Branch Committees of the NUTGW and ITGWU. This lack of official union involvement was not because the full-time officers and activists disagreed with the demands of the civil rights protestors. As we have seen, Macgougan, McGonagle, and Hamill - senior full-time officers of the NUTGW, ITGWU and ATGWU respectively - were among the most prominent anti-partitionist labour politicians of the post-war era, and had frequently drawn attention to the issue of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland. Seamus Quinn, McGonagle's deputy organiser, and all the union activists whom I interviewed indicated some degree of sympathy with the cause of civil rights. Seamus Quinn participated in the 5 October march, and Miss McMorris, a member of the Derry Branch Committee of the ITGWU, shared the keen sense of injustice about the Unionist domination of Derry which made the city the focus of the CRM¹². Even Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson - pro-Union NUTGW activists - revealed some concern for the issues raised by the civil rights protestors. The former told me that 'there was a time when things wasn't equal' between Protestants and

Catholics in Derry; the latter took part in the 5 October demonstration. These were the leaders of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry; why did they not seek to add the weight of their organisations to the civil rights movement?

The first explanation which we must consider is that implicit in Rolston's (1980) model of trade unionism in Northern Ireland as an essentially 'economistic' institution. According to Rolston, trade unions in Northern Ireland have 'done little to confront issues on which labour movements in other societies might be expected to agitate' (1980: 81); the issues to which he refers include those subsumed under the phrase 'class politics' and those to do with religious inequality in or outside the workplace and repression (cf Munck, 1986: 86). He concedes that the NIC-ICTU and the NILP submitted demands for one man one vote and the repeal of the Special Powers Act to the government in 1964, but he dismisses this as being out of character - the work of a few communist trade unionists who were unrepresentative of the movement as a whole. It is this political emasculation which, by Rolston's lights, makes the union movement in Northern Ireland a failure, and he sees it as an inevitable consequence of sectarianism among the working class: 'the taking [of] political stances outside purely trade union issues' by trade union leaders 'would certainly drive away one or other section of the divided clientele' (1980: 73). As I have made clear, I disagree with Rolston's view that an inability to pursue class politics or effectively challenge discriminatory or repressive legislation makes Northern Ireland trade unionism a failure, or even that it sets it apart from trade union movements in other times and places. Nevertheless it is worth re-examining the history of trade unionism in the shirt industry in the 1950s and 1960s to see, first, whether the officials and activists behaved according to Rolston's model and suppressed their political views for fear of driving 'away one or other section of their divided clientele', and, second, to what extent this explains the lack of official involvement in the CRM.

Of the three unions with members in the shirt industry, the ATGWU, which had the least number of shirt workers as members, conforms most closely to Rolston's model. George Hamill became an

ATGWU official in 1950. The reader may recall that at the time of his appointment Hamill was a leading member of the Northern Ireland section of the IrLP, and that shortly after his appointment he was asked by the regional organiser of the union to desist from his political activities because Protestant bus workers were threatening to leave the union. Hamill complied and the Protestant bus workers remained loyal to the union. However, it is worth noting that Hamill was, to some extent, a willing victim: at the 1985 conference of the Irish Labour History Society (ILHS) he was asked why he left the IrLP, he replied: 'when you fought two or three elections and got such a bloody hammering... you get depressed sometimes'². Hamill's only notable public association with the CRM was when he sent a telegram to Harold Wilson at the behest of several hundred dockers who marched to the offices of the ATGWU to protest about the way in which the police had dealt with one of the many demonstrations which followed the 5 October march.

As we saw in the last chapter, the opposition to Macgougan's politics from the Derry membership of the NUTGW was even more intense than that experienced by Hamill. Like Hamill, Macgougan was a prominent member of the IrLP, but in this case the pressure came from both Catholic and Protestant activists. They resented his left-wing views, and his attempts to high-light religious inequality in Northern Ireland; moreover, they felt that his political activities were inhibiting their efforts to recruit new members. Macgougan was in a stronger position than Hamill - he was his own boss, answerable only to a British National Executive which was sympathetic to his political views - and refused to give in to the demand that he curtail his political activities. He retired from active politics some years later because he was disillusioned with the IrLP:

Electoral defeats convinced me (at last) that there was no hope for a non-sectarian, socialist, nationally minded political body. It was only pressure from friends that persuaded me to defend the Falls council seat in 1959 - the Irish Labour Party the North was only a small group. (correspondence May 1987).

Initially, the Northern Ireland section of the IrLP had had some spectacular successes: in the local government elections of 1949 IrLP candidates won seven seats in the Belfast wards of Falls and Smithfield, and secured control of Newry and Warrenpoint Councils; in

the 1951 Jack Beattie, the Party treasurer, was elected MP (Westminster) for West Belfast. However, as Farrell points out (1980: 223), the Party 'quickly began to fall apart.' He describes the process as follows (1980: 223-224):

Frank Hanna MP left almost immediately having secured his seat in Belfast Central. Early in 1951 there was a violent split between Harry Diamond and the majority led by Jack Beattie and Jack Macgougan. It was at least partly over the majority's call for changes in the ultra-Catholic laws and constitution in the South.

In subsequent elections official IrLP candidates were opposed by members of the Diamond-Hanna group:

In the 1958 Stormont Election the official Party again failed to win a single seat and a few months later they were all... eliminated in the Corporation elections by a new Catholic group led by Hanna. Beattie died a few months later and the Irish Labour Party faded from the scene in the North.

Under the pressure of Orange sectarianism they had been forced to confine themselves to Catholic ghettos, only to be shattered and destroyed by the virulent anti-communism and anti-socialism of the Catholic Church of the 1950s and ghetto sectarianism against a mainly Protestant-led Party.

In the 1960s Macgougan devoted himself to trade union work: he was President of the ITUC 1963-64, and in 1968 he was elected general secretary of the NUTGW. Macgougan left for England just as the CRM was gathering momentum.

Contrary to what Rolston would have us believe, Macgougan's controversial political stance did not 'drive away' members: as we have seen, NUTGW membership increased amongst both Catholics and Protestants. In two other respects, however, the case of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW confirms Rolston's argument. In the first place, Macgougan's experiences in Derry altered his view of the relationship between trade unionism and politics. Macgougan was a political activist before he was union official. Prior to his appointment as Irish Regional Organiser of the NUTGW, he worked for an accountancy firm, and one of the main attractions of the NUTGW job was that he thought it would allow more scope for his political activity. In one sense he was right: several of the people who worked in the Belfast headquarters of the union - particularly his secretary, Ann McKenna - were sympathetic to his politics and made it easier for him to cope with the heavy work load generated by his various roles: union

official, secretary of the Northern Section of the IrLP, and member of Belfast Corporation. However, following the conflict in the Derry Branch Macgougan came to regard his union work and his political activity as distinct aspects of his life which did not 'mix'. He did not use union platforms to air his political views, nor did he attempt to proselytise NUTGW members.

Secondly, as a direct result of the conflict over Macgougan's politics, members of the Derry Branch Committee decided to exclude political matters from their meetings. As the reader may recall, the conflict was very bitter, and the Committee members felt that any further discussion of contentious political issues would make it impossible for them to continue working with each other, and would alienate potential recruits. It was for these reasons that the Branch never discussed the issues raised by the CRM - the gerrymander, discrimination in the allocation of houses, and in public employment. Miss Gallagher told me:

Those political things [weren't] discussed, the only time was when the Committee [was] totally against Macgougan. Mary Pollock did raise a racket - she was a true Unionist - but I agreed with them at times... We talked among ourselves when visiting, we could put our point of view [then]... [but] with the union you had to keep things stable because we'd never have got the Catholics back if we'd been dealing with politics.

Thus, NUTGW activists adopted an, in Rolston's terms, 'economistic' attitude to their union activities: they voted against Derry Trades Council affiliating to the National Council for Civil Liberties (Minute: 1 November 1960); when Mrs Henderson and Margaret Davis (pseudonym), the Branch officer's secretary, attended the 5 October demonstration, they did so only in a personal capacity; and both Mrs Henderson and Miss Gallagher opposed those shirtmakers who wanted to leave work to join civil rights demonstrations. The former told them that 'your work has nothing to do with that.' The latter tried to persuade them not to leave the factory by drawing their

attention to the fact that we weren't going to get the work out and we weren't going to get orders - you couldn't say you were against civil rights.

Miss Gallagher tried to set an example to other NUTGW members:

We were on strike on days and [I] kept them at the work. When the trouble started they were pulling us out as well - it was political. If there was a march or something, if you went in [to work], they'd say 'is Kathy Gallagher going

in?' Well I would go no matter. I always went to my work. The only political campaign in which NUTGW members participated in an official capacity was the university campaign. This probably reflects the fact that it was a comparatively uncontentious issue. According to Mrs Henderson,

All of Derry was very bitter about that [the New University of Ulster being located at Coleraine] irrespective [of religion or politics]... I was at the meeting in the Guildhall.

And Miss Gallagher told me:

I was one of the people went to Stormont [to protest about university decision]. The union was involved... a crowd went from McCarthy's, but not many - they were one-sided too. We had a good Committee going, very genuine people, Lily Hughes and they went from Hunter's [factory] and she was very opposite - wasn't a nationalist by any means - but she put Derry first... I was picked from my department, I was the only NUTGW shop steward at the time. The other girls were picked by drawing names out of a hat, some of them were only teenagers, not an ideal choice: they said they would go but they were no more interested in universities - [to them it] was just a day out. Harrison's put a car at our disposal, and Mr Harrison's chauffeur.

McGonagle found it easier to combine his job as organising secretary of the ITGWU in Derry with his political activities than did either Hamill or Macgougan. Like Hamill and Macgougan, Stephen McGonagle was a prominent member of the IrLP, but he left the Party following his resignation from the NUTGW and devoted several years to the task of establishing the breakaway union. He returned to active politics in 1958 when he stood against Eddie McAteer, the leader of the Nationalist Party, in the Northern Ireland (ie Stormont) general election of that year. He repeated the challenge in the Stormont elections of 1962. According to George Hamill, both election campaigns were funded by the ITGWU. Moreover, although McGonagle stood as an Independent Labour candidate, he received the tacit support of most ITGWU activists in Derry. In section 6.2 I noted that several of the most prominent members of the ITGWU in Derry, Lawrence Hegarty, Paddy Hamill, and Barney Donaghey shared McGonagle's anti-partitionist labour views. The two ITGWU activists in my sample of respondents, Miss Cosgrave and Miss McMorris, also supported McGonagle in his campaigns against McAteer.

Despite these propitious circumstances, McGonagle lost both elections. He polled well on both occasions: in 1958 he received 5,238 votes, in 1962 he got 5,476^(a). However, by all accounts, not many of these votes came from his members in the shirt industry. George Hamill supported McGonagle in the 1962 election campaign. At the 1985 ILHS conference, Hamill was asked about the role of trade unions in labour politics in Derry. He replied:

I'm afraid the trade unions didn't play a very big role. You had a lot of prominent trade unionists like McGonagle and myself... and Pat McGowan who did take an active part. But the trade unions as such? I remember the time even when McGonagle stood in the latter stages, later on in the 1960s, and he had a strong organisation of... factory girls, he was well known and done good work for them as a trade unionist. I went down to man the booth, but the factory girls all came up with Nationalist cards to vote Nationalist against McGonagle despite the fact that he was their trade union official and done good ground-work in the factories for them. There was no strong organisation of labour people. You had a party of about 30 or 40 and that was nearly our height at any particular time. And you got a bit of support in the [mainly Catholic] South Ward [but] when I fought in the Waterside [during the 1949 local elections] I wouldn't say there was more than half a dozen labour men in the Waterside Ward. It was a strong Unionist area. The only reason I saved my deposit was because the nationalists had nobody else to vote for but the labour people and they weren't going to do that only they were persuaded: it was a clergy man that knew me who persuaded them to go out and vote for me.

Miss Cosgrave explained McGonagle's failure to translate his popularity as a union leader into votes in the following way:

There again there was this trend of religion again, and this trend of anybody voting against the Nationalist. Let's put it that way: they didn't know how good a man they were getting. But it was this old tradition of Unionism and nationalism, and it was a crime not to vote nationalism. [I] Never voted [for the Nationalist Party], I voted labour all my life because I was interested in the labour and I thought they were doing a good job, but this is one of the reasons [that the women didn't vote for him] because he was standing against [the] Nationalist.

Miss McMorris told me,

Well, you see, nationalis[m] very strong. I know people [who] said, 'Stephen's a very good man and I'm with him whole-heartedly as a trade union member, but no, never [vote for him].' And that's the way they said it - a bit like the present-day Unionist and 'No Surrender!' type of thing.

Miss McMorris herself, found it difficult enough to decide who to

vote for. She recalled that prior to the 1962 election McGonagle had asked her what she thought about him standing against McAteer:

He [McGonagle] meant like would it interfere with my national minded[ness], I said it did not - I was in the office [and] he asked me how I felt about it - but my father was a strong nationalist even though he was a strong labour man, but nationalist overrided [labour]. He said he'd only vote labour within the 32 counties because labour was very important only for the country, but, like, there was a whole lot of people were brought up the way I was: whatever your father voted you voted or else it would be murder. But I went in and told my father I was voting labour... and he says back to me... he says, 'alright, I don't mind.' I didn't have to tell him anyhow when you think back. But, I just says to him, 'don't be asking me to vote nationalist, I'm voting labour,' well he says to me, 'as long as you don't vote the Communist Party.' You know, it was in him, although his own father was a Protestant. My grandfather McMorris was a Belfast Protestant.

Following his defeat in 1962 McGonagle gave up electoral politics, and he advised his assistant, Seamus Quinn, against challenging McAteer in the 1967 Stormont Election. Quinn ignored his advice, fought the election and lost (he recieved 4,300 votes). Quinn recalled the election campaigns against McAteer in the following way:

There were sections [of the shirt workforce that] the Nationalist Party had; you know, even though they were members of our union they were agin [us] - like Tillie and Henderson [workers] I remember sending a telegram - that sort of things: they weren't all for us.

In this light it is perhaps not surprising that although most ITGWU activists shared a common political outlook with their officials, and although the union as a whole was more homogeneous in its religious composition than was the NUTGW, political issues were not usually discussed at Committee meetings. Both McGonagle and Quinn were prominent in the University campaign, and the former made occasional attempts to high-light the need for reform within Northern Ireland (eg Irish Weekly 8 October 1964), but neither man associated themselves or their union with the CRM. As I pointed out in the last chapter, McGonagle devoted increasing amounts of his time to union affairs at regional and national level during the 1960s, and gradually delegated responsibility for local matters to Quinn. When Quinn marched on 5 October, he did so as an 'individual' not as an

officer of the ITGWU. And although the Branch Committee quietly approved of shirt workers who left their work to join civil rights demonstrations, there was, according to Quinn, 'no question of an official attitude.'

To sum up. The histories of the Derry Branches of the ATGWU, NUTGW, and ITGWU show that the relationship between union activity and politics is more complex than Rolston allows for. Nevertheless they each conform, to a greater or lesser extent, to his model of economism: trade union officials and activists agreed to exclude consideration of contentious political issues from Branch Committee meetings because they did not want to offend their colleagues and the wider membership. And this economism goes some way towards explaining why officials and activists, many of whom were sympathetic to the concerns articulated by the CRM, did not attempt to secure official union backing for the civil rights protests. However, to simply attribute the lack of union involvement in the CRM to the habitual timidity of trade union officials and activists would be to do them an injustice; more importantly, it would be to misrepresent the situation. After all, trade union officials and activists were not the only actors in the situation. The CRM was not simply a unitary set of progressive ideas which trade unionists choose to act, or not act, upon. On the contrary, the CRM resembles what some writers, following Foucault, refer to as a discursive formation: 'an arena of noisy speech and action in which different perspectives on the world clash, displacing and decentering each other' (Kapferer, 1988: 97). We need to look more closely at the nature of the CRM and the way it related to the world of trade unionism.

The issues at the heart of the protest movement in Derry in the 1960s were the university, discrimination in housing, and Protestant domination of local government. These issues, particularly the last two, were undoubtedly of immediate concern to many shirt workers, but they were remote from the workplace and the world of trade unionism⁽⁴⁾. The failure to establish a link between the concerns of the CRM and the concerns of trade unionism was not the fault of union activists and officials alone: the leaders of the various campaigns and committees which preceded the CRM showed little interest in the

trade union movement. For example, Miss Gallagher described the 'University For Derry' motorcade to Stormont in the following way:

a day wasted, we got no further than the lawn... Not so many trade unionists there... Glover was the mayor... everybody put him to be one-sided, he was blamed for not pushing the issue⁽⁵⁾. Stephen [McGonagle] was for it [he supported the campaign] and went to the protest, and a few of his union... were all for it... I wasn't very enamoured with the company I was in, there weren't alot of trade union minded people [there].

Two main groups contended for the leadership of the emergent CRM: moderates, like John Hume, who formed the Citizens Action Committee (DCAC) and who saw the CRM as an attempt to secure basic civil rights for the citizens of Northern Ireland; and young republicans and socialists who thought of it as a way of uniting the working class, and who had the longer term goal of a workers' republic. In the days after 5 October, some of the radicals began to visit shirt factories with the intention of persuading shirt workers to join the protest movement. McCann, for example, told me that the marches by shirt workers in November 1968 were not completely

spontaneous: I ran into factories, I went to the Rosemount [factory], stood on a chair and they followed me out. There were about 19 separate marches in defiance of Craig's [Minister for Home Affairs] ban [on marches].

However, the young radicals did not seek the co-operation of either the ITGWU or the NUTGW, and their relations with union officials and activists were strained.

To say that relations between the young radicals and the two main NUTGW activists in Derry, Miss Gallagher and Mrs Henderson, were strained is, in fact, an understatement. A more appropriate word to describe the feelings of these two women towards the radicals would be loathing. Mrs Henderson expressed a strong distaste for the radicals' life-style; Miss Gallagher disagreed with their socialism and found their attitude to her alarming. Underlying both women's feelings, however, was a belief that the radicals were Irish republicans. As I mentioned above, Mrs Henderson supported the 'University for Derry Campaign' and took part in the 5 October demonstration. This indicates that she had some sympathy for the demands which fueled the CRM. Now, however, after 20 years of violence, she thinks that the situation in Derry

would have been alright, they [Catholics] brought it [poor housing and unemployment] on themselves, they went the wrong way about it [redressing the situation].

And her main reason for telling me that she attended the 5 October demonstration was to explain why she did not support the CRM:

I was walking in that march myself... Betty Sinclair [a prominent Belfast Communist and one of the members of the original NICRA steering committee] asked for it to be peaceful, but I seen a section of the crowd lifting stones - there was a building site - they threw them, and all [hell] broke loose... The police were attacked first... I realised then that that was the start of the IRA movement. <6>

Mrs Henderson's opposition to Catholic workers in McCarthy's who wanted to abandon their work to take part in demonstrations was not only a reflection of her desire to distance the NUTGW from their action, nor was it simply because she could not see any intrinsic connection between industrial action and the CRM ('your work has nothing to do with that'): it expressed her deep suspicion of what the CRM was about. Today she is glad that she left the shirt industry before the strikes and walk-outs which followed events like Bloody Sunday: 'I wouldn't have lasted, I wouldn't have let them walk-out [Mrs Henderson became a forewoman in the late 1960s, see Appendix 11.]'

As we have seen, Miss Gallagher also attempted to dissuade those members of the NUTGW in Harrison's factory who wanted to leave work to support the CRM. She too had suspicions about the intentions of the radicals, but she did not voice them - 'you couldn't say you were against civil rights.' Nevertheless, she claims that the radicals attempted to discredit her:

You had the like of Eamonn McCann and his party came to see me, three young men. And they came specially - it was an awful thing - they wrote a whole ditty on me and what I was trying to do and they named me and passed this bill head to everybody going out [of the factory]. It was some of those socialist crowd. I was very shocked at that... I had a very unpleasant time for the last 10 years of my stay in Harrison's... they thought I was pro-British, that was the crux of the matter

During one of my first interviews with Miss Gallagher she implied that the young men who came to see her favoured the ITGWU as opposed to the British based NUTGW, but in a later interview she told me that they were equally critical of both organisations

You had the like of Eamonn McCann snooping about... and sending some of these chaps to the door to see if they could get hold of me... they put this question to you, 'what's the union doing for you?' You know. They didn't want you... it wasn't for the sake of that he wanted us to go to Stephen's [McGonagle's union]... it was like the union's no good to us - that type of thing - [that] they weren't doing anything for us... He wouldn't have been pushing for [the ITGWU]... he sort of had his own principle about it.

A difference in political perspective was also the main cause of strain between the radicals in the CRM and ITGWU officials and activists. In this case, however, the problem was not to do with national identity - ITGWU activists and officials were, as we have seen, opposed to partition too. Rather, it seems to have been rooted in a tension between labourism and revolutionary socialism. Quinn told me:

We were out Uncle Toms according to them [the radicals]... but we never got hostile, but, nevertheless, we never had much to do with them.

Miss McMorris expressed strong views about Bernadette Devlin - then a member of PD, and closely aligned with the Derry radicals -

See when I used to hear Bernadette Devlin talking about being a shop [steward] I used to see red, it's a wonder I didn't have blood pressure. I used to see red at anybody talked about [being] a shop steward or a trade union[ist] that never sat their backside in it, or worked as a shop steward. They hadn't a clue. They're as far removed as we are now from heaven.

Miss McMorris's dislike of Bernadette Devlin was, in part, an expression of their different experiences - the one a factory worker who felt insecure about her education (see chapter six passim), the other a university student - but it seems to me that it must also be seen in the context of Miss McMorris's general suspicion of left-wing ideas. She described the response of a member of the CPI to a speech which she gave at an ICTU conference in the following way:

All my life I was whispering like 'he's a communist,' and I remember this man Barr shook his fist at me, meaning - making the fist [demonstrating a salute] - fantastic speech I gave! [laughs]... I'm in a religious organisation now, but the fact is... communis[m] has... good points, alright, maybe they went too far. There's so many different aspects of that, that when you say communist you have to understand what you're talking about, not ignorant the way most of us are brought up... I was introduced to one [a communist]... at the last [ICTU] conference I was at... I shook hands with him and I said, 'that's the first communist I shook

hands with'; he was there as a delegate.

Certainly, McCann felt that a suspicion of left-wing ideas was something which inhibited his efforts in Derry: he pointed out that there was 'never any radical tradition in Derry, never any Communist Party,' but he also felt that 'we made a bad job of explaining,' and linked this to the fact that many of the young radicals in Derry were from a 'university milieu' or had spent time in England -

we failed to explain; it seemed that we were just against everything, we didn't get it across that what we were doing was part of a coherent world view.

Thus, although the radicals sought to mobilise shirt workers in support of the CRM, they were at odds with trade union officials and activists. This was not simply because of the latter's economism; that is, their desire to keep politics out of the workplace and out of their unions. To be sure, the trade unionists were suspicious of the radical's politics: NUTGW activists regarded them as anti-British, and ITGWU activists were unsympathetic to their revolutionary socialist ideas. However, the radicals were equally suspicious of the trade union officials and activists: they regarded them as, in McCann's words, 'conservative trade unionists' or 'bureaucrats', and made no effort to cultivate them. Moreover, to judge from Miss Gallagher's recollections, union activists seem to have, correctly, interpreted the radicals' intervention as a threat to their authority.

The moderates of the DCAC - many of whom were business men (see Curran, 1986: 86) - were uneasy about shirt workers leaving their work to participate in demonstrations and called for an end to all unplanned marches (see Purdie, 1987: 44). However, although eager to marginalise the radicals, the moderates did not make common cause with officials and activists of the NUTGW and ITGWU. On the contrary, they seem to have gone to some lengths to prevent trade unionists from becoming involved in the CRM. For example, Quinn claimed, 'I was elected to the Committee of 15 [i.e. the DCAC], but it was seen to in the Guildhall that I didn't get on [the committee].' I asked, 'by whom?' He replied:

I'll not say... everybody knew... the tellers voted me down. It was only on a show of hands and I was clearly

elected, but we didn't make an issue of it. That [the Committee of 15] was Hume and all those people.

To sum up. The full-time officers of the unions which organised in the Derry shirt industry were among the most prominent and energetic left-wing politicians in Northern Ireland during the post war period. They articulated a moderate form of labour-nationalism, but were never able to secure the support of more than a few of their union members. Aware of the fact that most of their members were unsympathetic to their political ideals, the officers pursued their union careers and their political ambitions more or less separately. Union activists also tended to avoid contentious political issues when acting in their capacity as Branch Committee members: they too were aware that their particular views might not be shared by the wider membership; NUTGW activists, in particular, learnt that to raise political issues in Branch Committee meetings was to risk alienating some of their colleagues. To this extent, the trade unions which organised in the Derry shirt industry were, in Roslton's terms, economistic. The lack of official union involvement in the CRM can, in part, be explained in terms of this economism. However, it is important to recognise that the CRM was not just a set of progressive demands but a mass movement in which people with different perspectives clashed and competed for power. The various contenders had, for different reasons, little time for trade unionism; they acted without regard for trade union activists, and, in some instances, in ways which seem to have been calculated to exclude them from active involvement in the protest movement. Thus, in this case at least, the lack of official union support for the undoubtedly progressive demands of the CRM cannot be seen simply as a failure on the part of trade union activists and officials. Moreover, the fact that neither the NUTGW or the ITGWU were associated with the CRM had a positive sequel: trade unionism in the shirt industry remained intact despite the deterioration in Catholic-Protestant relations which followed the events of autumn and winter 1968. The NUTGW retained its mixed religious membership, and relations between the officers and activists of the NUTGW and ITGWU continued to improve.

It have no desire to use the material presented in this section to make generalisations about the relationship between trade unionism, labourism, and socialist politics in Northern Ireland: my respondents were not choosen with this purpose in mind, and, as I argued in section 1.2, one of the obstacles to understanding trade unionism in Northern Ireland has been the tendency for it to get submerged in debates about the nature of local politics. However, it is worth re-emphasising the point that the inability of trade union officials - most of whom were, as we have seen, prominent labour politicians - to interest more than a few of their members in broader labour politics, and their consequent tendency to separate their trade union careers from their political activity, does not make trade unionism in Northern Ireland so very different from trade unionism elsewhere. For example, Watson notes (1988: 171-172) that none of the British union officials whom she interviewed suggested:

that their role as union officers was to act to bring about revolutionary social transformation. The majority were active Labour Party members involved in wider campaigns at local and national level against discrimination and inequality in society. But their work as union officers was seen to take place within the framework of the existing structures of society...

The indirect position of officers encouraged them to take a broader and longer term view than members. They regretted that their members tended to 'think individually not collectively' which was seen not to be a 'proper trade union attitude'... [They] argued that members were generally concerned only with getting the best for themselves in their own limited context.

8.3 Trade Unionism and Sectarianism in the Derry Shirt Industry: a Conclusion

In chapter one I posed the question: to what extent and in what ways was the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry 1920-1968 influenced by sectarianism? I am now in a position to attempt an overall answer to that question.

The Protestant-Catholic dichotomy loomed large in the recollections of my respondents. It was taken for granted that most

factory owners and managers were Protestants. It was also widely thought that Protestants were over-represented in the better paid and supposedly more skilled jobs associated with shirt cutting. The women workers who constituted the bulk of the workforce were described as being 'segregated' by religion such that a few particular factories were identified with the Protestant community. Statistical information relating to the religious composition of the shirt industry is sparse, but each of these generalisations is consistent with the overall history of the industry, and, where possible, was corroborated with respect to documentary sources.

Although keenly aware of sectarianism as an enduring pattern of differentiation in the shirt industry and the wider community, my respondents did not regard sectarian differences between shirt workers as a problem in relation to trade unionism until the secession of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in 1952 (see sections 4.1 and 4.4). My analysis of union growth and structure in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s largely confirmed this view. During this period, and indeed both before and after it, the most obvious organisational division among shirt workers was that between shirt cutters on the one hand, and shirtmakers and finishers on the other: the former were members of the ATGWU, the latter were members of the NUTGW. Although most of the shirt cutters who joined the ATGWU were Protestants and Unionists, this was not a sectarian division: the Derry Branch of the ATGWU was led by Catholics and the core of the Branch were dockers and carters who were traditionally a mainly Catholic and strongly nationalist group of workers. The initial defection of shirt cutters to the ATGWU was triggered by a strike which took place in 1920 (see section 3.4). The rationale for the defection was that the ATGWU, largely because of the dockers' ability to embargo shirt factories, was a more powerful union than the NUTGW (see section 5.2). This was true at the time; however, both the original defection and the subsequent determination of most shirt cutters to remain members of the ATGWU was shown to be based in a concern to maintain their separate identity as skilled men amid a predominantly female workforce in a context where the skilled and masculine status of their trade was uncertain and threatened (see section 5.4). As I pointed out in chapter five, this kind of

exclusivism is a familiar feature in the history of trade unionism in the British Isles and elsewhere.

Union membership among women shirt workers reached a peak in 1919, declined in the 1920s and 1930s, and increased prodigiously after 1945. This pattern of decline and growth was in line with United Kingdom trends, and the institutional factors influencing it - labour market conditions, union-management relations, the effectiveness of internal union organisation - were shown to be more or less the same as those affecting union membership elsewhere (see sections 4.1 and 4.2). Moreover, contrary to those theories which suggest that trade unionism in Northern Ireland was underdeveloped because of sectarian divisions among workers, the density of trade unionism among women shirtmakers in Derry compared favourably with those in the British clothing industry generally. In view of the importance which feminist historians and sociologists have attached to women's subordinate position in the family, and prevailing ideas about it, as a barrier to their involvement in trade unionism, it might be thought that the organisation of women in Derry was made easier because, by all accounts, female shirtmakers there were often the main family breadwinner. In fact, the extent of role-reversal between men and women in Derry families is exaggerated in popular beliefs, and it would seem that married, and younger single, women in Derry were no more inclined, or able, to get involved in trade unionism than their sisters elsewhere: trade union activists tended to be older single women (see section 4.3). However, the popular idea of women-as-breadwinners may have contributed to the unionisation of women in an indirect way. The prodigious growth in NUTGW membership in the late 1940s was largely the result of the efforts of the two full-time union organisers - Jack Macgougan and Stephen McGonagle - who were appointed in 1945 and 1947 respectively. Their enthusiasm for the organisation of women workers contrasts with the indifference which, it is said (see Charles, 1983), often characterises the attitude of male union officials towards their female members. The enthusiasm of Jack Macgougan and Stephen McGonagle was shown to be linked to an appreciation of the importance of women's wages in the shirt industry to their families and to the local economy more generally.

This is not to suggest that trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry was unaffected by sectarianism as a pervasive social division, or untainted by sectarian antagonism between shirt workers. I will consider the latter aspect first. Religious and political differences between shirt workers were, for the most part, latent. My respondents remarked on a heightening of tension on the 12 July, 12 August, and 'poppy day' - all dates which are of particular symbolic importance to Protestants, but they recalled no occasion when these tensions gave rise to overt conflict or disrupted union activity. In fact, they recalled only two occasions when sectarian antagonism came to the fore. The first occurred in 1954 when members of the ITGWU struck against the employment of a member of the NUTGW in the laundry department in Harrison's factory (see section 6.5). The second occurred in 1962 when NUTGW members broke a strike by ITGWU members in McCarthy's factory (see section 7.3). The division between the NUTGW and the ITGWU was sectarian to the extent that the former, a British based and oriented union, was, for a time, a mainly Protestant organisation, and the latter, an Irish based union, was mainly Catholic. However, the organisational cleavage was not, itself, the result of sectarian divisions among shirt workers; rather, it arose in the course of a secessionary movement which developed out of an intra-union power struggle. As I noted in chapter six and chapter seven, such power struggles are endemic in trade unionism (see James, 1984: 113), and when they give rise to a breakaway union, then, relations between the breakaway and the established union usually become characterised by rivalry and bitterness (see Lerner, 1961: 197). Both of the aforementioned strikes arose out of such an inter-union rivalry. Thus, in the case of the Derry shirt industry sectarian antagonisms were activated by inter-union rivalry which was itself the result of a fairly typical trade union power struggle.

This is a very significant conclusion. Its significance is that it inverts the causal relationship between sectarianism and trade unionism which most scholars have postulated. The usual argument, developed most by traditional Irish marxists, is that sectarian conflict in the workplace - caused by competition for, and discrimination in the allocation of, jobs, or by ruling class manipulation, or by a combination of both - inhibited the development

of trade unionism. However, as we saw in section 4.4, discrimination in the allocation of women's jobs was not a contentious issue between Protestants and Catholics in the shirt industry; moreover, the protagonists in both of the strikes did not act in the way that they did because of ruling class manipulation. In fact, in the case of the dispute in Harrison's factory, the management adopted a stance of studied neutrality, and local notables - Protestant and Catholic, Unionist and nationalist - sought to mediate between the disputants. Management were not neutral in the case of McCarthy's: ITGWU members struck because management refused to recognise their shop steward, but, to characterise the leader of the NUTGW strike-breakers, Mrs Henderson, as a puppet of management would be fantastic. Religious and political differences between shirt workers were always there, but they remained latent until activated by rivalry between the NUTGW and the breakaway union. However, it is true to say that, once activated, political differences contributed to the perpetuation of what remained, fundamentally, an inter-union hostility.

Proponents of the view that trade unionism was thwarted by sectarianism might concede the argument presented in the last two paragraphs, but assert that it misses the point. After all, the main thrust of Rolston's argument is that sectarianism was 'necessarily reconstituted' (1980:71) within trade unionism - irrespective of whether or not individual trade unionists felt antagonistic towards workers with a different religious and political identity - because sectarianism was and is one of the fundamental structural divisions in Northern Irish society (see also Rolston, 1983: 206); a division which has a 'material reality' in segregated workplaces, housing, schools, sports, and recreation facilities (see O'Dowd, 1980a: 25). I do not dispute that sectarianism is an enduring social division which is deeply embedded in many of the institutions of Northern Irish life; indeed, I have detailed the pattern of religious segregation in Derry workplaces. Nor do I dispute that in this context certain routine union practices can result in organisations which tend to be composed solely, or mainly, of people with the same religious identity, and which can therefore be described as sectarian; on the contrary, I discussed such a process on a number of occasions. For example, in section 4.4 I noted that in the 1940s the

Derry Branch of the NUTGW was a mainly Catholic organisation, and I showed that this reflected both the general underdevelopment of the Branch at the time and the tendency of the local part-time officer, Sarah Doherty, to rely on friends and relatives for recruitment and organisation. Given the degree of segregation in Northern Ireland society, personal networks are often confined to co-religionists, and this seems to have been the case with Sarah Doherty: she and her shop stewards were Catholics. Another example is the situation which arose in the two or three years after the 1952 breakaway. Protestants left the breakaway following its merger with the ITGWU because they did not want to be part of an Irish union; similarly there was a reluctance among many Catholics to join the NUTGW because it had come to be perceived as a distinctly British union. To be sure, some Catholics joined the NUTGW rather than the ITGWU because of family loyalties (see section 6.4), but the pattern was for the NUTGW to be mainly Protestant and the ITGWU mainly Catholic. In section 7.3 I showed how this pattern was reinforced by rivalry between the two unions: activists in both unions who sought to recruit new workers were harassed by members of the rival union. Moreover, in line with the religious segregation of the workforce, NUTGW and ITGWU membership tended to be concentrated in particular factories and this made it even more difficult for the officials of either union to gain a foothold in factories dominated by the opposing union.

Nevertheless, what Rolston (1980: 71) calls 'sectarian trade unionism' did not develop in the the Derry shirt industry, and to understand why not, one must take account of that which Rolston dismisses: social action by real, historical individuals. The trade union activists and officials whom I interviewed felt strongly about their various religious, political, and national identities. They were not immune to thinking of people who did not share their particular set of identities in terms of stereotypes. Those who took different sides during the 1952 breakaway expressed distrust of each other and articulated suspicions that their opponents' actions were inspired by religious or political motives. One or two even referred to their own opinions and feelings as 'prejudiced'. However, it was precisely because they were not sectarian bigots that 'sectarian

trade unionism' did not develop in the Derry shirt industry: they each made a conscious effort to recruit, and co-operate with, shirt workers regardless of whether or not they shared the same religious and/or political identities - and, to a greater or lesser extent, they succeeded. Thus, in the late 1940s Macgougan and McGonagle transformed the NUTGW from a small, mainly Catholic, 'clique' into a mass organisation which included Protestants as well as Catholics (see section 4.4). And, in the 1960s, despite the bitterness generated by the breakaway and the resultant inter-union rivalry, the NUTGW, and to a lesser extent, the ITGWU succeeded in attracting members from both religious groups (see section 7.3); moreover, inter-union rivalry eventually gave way to inter-union accommodation (see section 7.4).

In short, the over-all conclusion of this thesis is that sectarianism was not as important a factor in the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry as traditional Irish marxists and others would lead us to expect. It could be said that this conclusion reflects the fact that the trade unions I studied were located in Derry whereas most other studies focus on Belfast: it is a commonplace among Derry people that their city is less sectarian than Belfast. It is true, as I noted in section 2.2, that Derry was not prone to the kind of inter-communal rioting which marked Belfast's development as a city in the nineteenth century. However, it seems to me that the notion that Derry is less sectarian than Belfast is wishful thinking: an expression of the localism which was discussed in section 6.3. Rather, on the basis of my study, I would suggest that sectarianism, in the sense of bigotry, has been generally less significant in the history of Northern Ireland than the traditional Irish marxists claim.

I am not alone in suggesting this: Patterson (1982) has made the same kind of argument. For traditional Irish marxists the significance of religious discrimination in the allocation of jobs and the resultant sectarian conflict between workers is not merely that it interfered with the development of trade unionism and socialist politics; it is that the privileged position in the labour market which Protestant workers achieved through religious

discrimination and sectarian conflict formed, and forms, the material basis for Unionism as a mass movement. Patterson (1982: 28-29) rejects this view. He argues that although sectarianism has always been an element in Protestant politics it has never been the main basis upon which support for Unionism has been mobilised: sectarianism does not have a 'pre-given significance, its importance is determined by specific circumstances.' In so far as workplace relations have been characterised by sectarianism,

it did not and does not reflect the needs of particular groups of Protestants to defend their privileges. It did and does reflect an intense distrust and antagonism of *some* [his emphasis] Protestant workers to Catholics which has its origins not in the sphere of production but in the state of inter-communal relations. The material basis of sectarianism is in this sense more question of territory than occupation.

In other words, workplace sectarianism has no independent significance: it becomes important when triggered by other, extraneous, factors. In this respect Patterson argues that 'the major out-breaks of violence in workplaces 'came only when there was a general political uncertainty about the future government of Ireland - 1886, 1912, 1920.' The case of the Derry shirt industry supports the central thrust of Patterson's thesis: sectarianism among shirt workers was latent until activated by a trade union power struggle. Moreover, territoriality seems to have been important: the dispute in Harrison's in 1954 developed when a Protestant member of the NUTGW was employed in a department which was both predominantly Catholic and an ITGWU stronghold; and the conflict in McCarthy's in 1962 followed an attempt by the ITGWU to secure a foothold in a factory which was both predominantly Protestant and the main stronghold of the NUTGW in Derry. However, contrary to Patterson's argument, neither conflict occurred at a time of 'political uncertainty about the future government of Ireland'; indeed, 1954 and 1962 were years when Catholic-Protestant relations in Derry were, in general, comparatively stable.

Why, then, have traditional Irish marxists placed so much emphasis on sectarianism? It may, in part, be part of a general tendency to look at history in terms of a present in which inter-communal relations have been poisoned by 20 years of violence. In the case of Rolston (1980), Munck (1986), and Munck and Rolston

(1987) it is undoubtedly linked to their adherence to a social theory according to which it is believed that, since action is determined by the social structures within which individuals are embedded, the meaning of action is either irrelevant or can be inferred from a knowledge of the structural setting. Thus, particular kinds of action are labelled as, or implied to be, sectarian even though no attempt has been made to understand the intentions of the actors; and particular institutions are labelled as 'sectarian' irrespective of the religious and political identities of the people who constitute them. However, this does not fully explain the way in which the term has been deployed. 'Sectarianism' and 'sectarian' are not neutral words: they carry negative connotations of bigotry and irrationality. Traditional Irish marxists argue that the politics of Northern Irish Protestants are based on sectarianism in the allocation of jobs; indeed one author has sought to restrict the term as being applicable only to Protestants (see Rolston, 1984: 206). In this way the political legitimacy of Unionism is undermined.

All in all I think that this study demonstrates the value of attempting to understand institutions in terms of the actions of the people who produced, reproduced, and changed them. In chapter one I developed this approach in relation to a debate between traditional and structural marxists which was in progress when I began my research. The debate has moved on since then. Various kinds of marxist revisionism have flourished in the difficult conditions of Britain in the late 1980s. Several scholars now appear to be articulating views of society and history similar to those advocated in this study, and, in drawing this thesis to a close, it would seem appropriate for me to comment on them from the perspective of this study.

One author has characterised recent trends in marxist theory as a 'retreat from class' (Wood, 1986). Some marxists have gone further down this road than others. Laclau and Mouffe, for example, are said to have abandoned the notion of class-based politics altogether (see Gamble, 1987: 113-114). Others have, as David Edgar remarked in a recent issue of the Guardian (3 February 1989):, come to think

that the future of socialism must lie in the synthesis of
traditional class analysis with the preoccupations,

insights, and perspectives of the new social movements in the late 1960s.

This synthesis involves a recognition of the importance of identities and realities other than class; for example, sex, ethnicity, and locality. Its main exponents are Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall, and other contributors to the journal Marxism Today.

There are certain points at which this thesis has converged with the revisionists. I, like many of them, once had a structuralist marxist world-view. I began to abandon this world-view when I was confronted by the realisation that my respondents' identities were much more complex than I had anticipated. Moreover, at several points in my thesis I have drawn on insights derived from various attempts to marry socialist and feminist theory. This is most marked in chapter five where I argue that underlying the decisions of male shirt cutters to join the ATGWU rather than the NUTGW was a fear of being supplanted by less-skilled, cheaper female labour. In this kind of argument the exclusivism of skilled male workers is explained as a by-product of their class struggle; that is, of their resistance to employers' attempts to deskil. However, I qualified this argument by suggesting, like Cockburn (1983: 151), that it failed to grasp the centrality of gender in the process. Cockburn, incidently, is currently a member of the Editorial Board of Marxism Today.

To conclude on the basis of these affinities that this study is part of a current trend in marxist theorising would be to lose my central argument. I am not simply saying that identities other than class are important. If I was saying this, then, I would have little argument with O'Dowd, Rolston, and Tomlinson (1980). One of the interesting and ironic aspects of O'Dowd et al's work is that in seeking to defend the central tenets of the traditional Irish marxist analysis of Northern Ireland against the criticisms of structuralist marxists like Bew, Gibbon, and Patterson (1979), they prefigure some of the recent trends in marxist revisionism. I am thinking particularly of O'Dowd's insistence on 'the importance of social divisions other than class in all historical capitalist societies', and of his attempt to marry class and sectarianism. The product of this marriage is the notion of 'sectarian class relations... sectarian division is a class phenomena and vice-versa' (1980: 25).

For me the problem with O'Dowd et al, as with much current revisionist thinking, is that they retain a deterministic model of society within which people are simply nodes in the social structure. Thus, while the revisionists have come to recognise the complexity of peoples' identities, they present this complexity as the result of changes in the economic base: from 'Fordist' mass production to 'Post-Fordism'. For example, Leadbeater writes (Marxism Today, October 1988: 15):

the mass aims of the social democratic state in providing services and housing were founded upon the 'mass' interests formed by the character of production and work. The Fordist era of mass-production workers, and mass consumers confirmed the sense that individual interests could be read off with some confidence from the great social blocs formed by production...

But changes in the character and distribution of work have undermined the unifying tendencies of production and work under Fordism. The economic restructuring of the 1980s has produced deep divisions within the working class...

In addition, in recent years the social theatre of consumption has become more important. Choice in consumption, life-style, sexuality, are more important as an assertion of identity.

Hall (ibid: 25) writes:

Classical marxism depended on an assumed correspondence between 'the economic' and 'the political': one could read off our political attitudes, interests, and motivations, from our economic class position. This correspondence between 'the political' and 'the economic' is exactly what has now disintegrated - practically and theoretically.

My respondents were born in the early part of this century; grew up in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s; and worked in a mass-production industry. Yet, as I have shown, their identities were never simple, nor could they ever have been simply read off from their economic position. Moreover, personal and subjective elements loomed large among their reasons for acting in particular ways at particular times. The central thrust of my thesis is that while people are influenced by society they also create and recreate it, and that to understand social and historical processes we must take what they have to say very seriously. The logic of my argument is not that class is unimportant, or that its importance is diminishing in late twentieth century Britain; rather, it is simply that if socialists are to be politically effective they need, first, to understand class as a relationship between concrete individuals,

something which is constructed by them as part of an historical process, and second, to take heed of what people say about their experience. There is little that is new in this: Edward Thompson said as much in his well known preface to The Making of the English Working Class. The fact that this is not a new insight does not diminish its force or its validity. However, I would like to take it further and urge social scientists and socialists to recognise that the personal and the subjective aspects of motivation are socially and politically important: not something to be left to the psychologist, psychoanalyst, or biographer.

Giddens (1979: 44) has argued:

The pressing task facing social theory today is not to further the conceptual elimination of the subject, but on the contrary to promote *a recovery of the subject* [his emphasis] without lapsing into subjectivism

I am sympathetic to this idea, but I think that Giddens's attempts at a formal general theory of agency and structuration are foredoomed, or at least premature. I suspect that Marx (1959: 109) was correct when he argued that the subject-object dualism is not something which can be resolved in the realm of abstract thought:

subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and suffering, only lose their antithetical character and thus their existence as such antitheses in the social condition: the resolution of theoretical antitheses is possible only in a practical way... their resolution is therefore by no means a problem of knowledge but a real problem of life.

What I would urge is the need for more studies of individual moral careers as a way of achieving a better sociological understanding of subjectivity. It is important to be clear that I have not attempted such a project in this thesis. Here I have used the recollections of a small group of trade union officials and activists as, to paraphrase Paul Thompson (1978: 205), 'a quarry from which to construct' an analysis of the development of trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry 1920-1968. I have sought to locate my respondents' recollections in the context of their life histories, and of the histories of the society and the particular institutions which they helped to build, but it was not part of my purpose to explain their individual careers. However, I imagine that if one was to attempt such a project, the best advice one could follow is that

offered by Abrams (1982: 267); that is, to treat the problem of understanding particular individuals and individuality historically: 'as a problem of understanding processes of becoming rather than states of being.'

APPENDIX 1: ORAL SOURCES

The main primary sources used in writing this thesis were not documents; they were interviews. As I explained in chapter one, I interviewed a total of 35 people and had conversations with many more. From all of these people I constructed a strategic sample of 11 trade union officials and activists whom I interviewed in more depth. Most direct and indirect quotation in the text is attributed to one or other of these 11 people, and unless stated otherwise, all these quotations are derived from the transcripts of tape-recorded interviews. Occasionally I quote, directly or indirectly, a respondent who was one of the many people with whom I conducted an interview or conversation but who was not included in my sample. In some of these cases the quote is derived from the transcript of a tape-recording; in other cases it is derived from field notes which were taken either at the time of the interview/conversation or shortly afterwards; whatever the case, the respondent is identified and the precise nature of the dialogue is described, usually in a footnote. Thus, all of the direct and indirect quotations used in this thesis are attributed to their author, and are accompanied by a note explaining who the person is and describing the circumstances in which the speech-act was made. However, in the case of the union activists and officials who were part of my strategic sample, I want to go further. As I pointed out in chapter one, a particular recollection is best understood when put in the context of the respondent's life history, their past and present circumstances. One of the advantages of focusing on a small sample of respondents is that it is possible to spend the time required to accumulate the necessary biographical detail. Accordingly, in this appendix I provide biographies for each of the 11 people in my sample.

I interviewed my sample of respondents with the intention of using their recollections as, to paraphrase Thompson (1978: 205), 'a quarry from which to construct' an analysis of the development of

trade unionism in the Derry shirt industry. It was not part of my original purpose to explain my respondents' life histories or their careers, and it is not my purpose in this appendix; rather, my respondents' biographies are presented in schematic fashion. Each biography is summarised under three headings: 'Family Background', 'Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience', and 'Political Affiliations'. They each contain basic information, but have been written so as to reflect those aspects of a respondent's life history which he or she considered important. Although presented schematically, the biographies presented in this appendix should enable the reader to readily identify the main characters in this history and gain a fuller understanding of them.

I constructed my sample so as to have at least one respondent who was a member of each of the trade unions which organised in the shirt industry between 1920 and 1968. Some of my respondents were a member of more than one of these unions, but each one is categorised according to the main trade union affiliation in which they appear in the text.

(Those names marked with an asterisk '*' are pseudonyms)

The United Garment Workers' Union

Name: JOHN McCORKEILL

Year of Birth: 1905

Family Background:

Born in Donegal. No brothers or sisters. Both of his parents were Presbyterians and Unionists. The family moved to Derry when John was very young; they lived in High Street on the edge of the the Bogside, but during the riots of 1920 they moved to the mainly Protestant Fountain area. His father worked in the gas works, but died when John was only 13. His mother was never employed, but kept pigs, and 'the pigs paid for the house'. By all accounts, it was not unusual for working class families in Derry to keep pigs or chickens. John

currently lives in Paisley (Scotland) with his second wife; his first wife died.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

John McCorkell was educated in a Catholic school. He regarded this as unusual, but was unable to explain it beyond pointing out that he lived in a mainly Catholic street. He started work as an apprentice cutter in McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh, and Co. in 1918 when he was 13. Apprentices usually started at the age of 14, John started a year early because, 'father died... no pensions for widows, no financial support; I had to go out to work, simple as that.' He got the apprenticeship through a relative:

this relative put a word in [for me], and of course a lot of jobs were done that way, particularly in the shirt trade - very difficult to get into that trade for boys, [for] girls there was no problem.

John was made redundant from McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh and Co. c1923. He worked as a bandknife operator in Desmond's and Hamilton's shirt factories before moving to Warrington. He returned to Derry c1926 because his mother was ill, but left the city 'for good' the following year. He worked in various clothing factories in the West of Scotland and became a NUTGW shop steward. During the Second World War he was elected to the National Executive of the NUTGW, and was appointed a full-time official, based in Paisley, in the late 1950s.

Political Affiliations:

He became interested in labour politics while still in Derry. His interest was stimulated by Annie Holmes, the UGW organiser in Derry, but was frowned upon by his mother (see section 3.3). After moving to Scotland he became a member of the Scottish Labour Party, and was elected to Renfrew District Council. He still takes an active interest in politics and is very critical of both the Communist Party of Great Britain, and 'home-rulers' in the Scottish Labour Party.

The Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union

Name: GEORGE HAMILL

Year of Birth: 1911

Family Background:

Born in Bishop Street, Derry. From a Catholic background. His father worked as a rigger in Derry shipyard until it closed in the mid 1920s, he was mostly unemployed after that; prior to working in the shipyard he had been a merchant seaman. He has no recollection of his mother in employment. His parents died 'just before [the Second World] War. He had one brother who

had to go to Birmingham in the '30s... he was a lorry driver. [He was] conscripted then... killed in April 1945.

George Hamill married in the 1940s. His mother-in-law bought a drapery shop for for her daughter; Mrs Hamill ran the business and they both lived above the shop. Mr Hamill still lives above the shop.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

He left school at 14. His first job was as a kitchen boy in Saint Columb's College, then he worked as a message boy for 'Tyler's the boot shop' and later as a bill poster for an advertising firm. The latter 'folded-up when the War started' and he 'was idle for nearly two years.' In 1942 he got a job in the Londonderry Port and Harbour Authority as the person 'in charge of the cattle pens.' It was while working for the Harbour Authority that George became active in the ATGWU. When he first joined the union 'ordinary labourers' were not represented on the Branch Committee; he argued that they should be, and was elected to represent them. He was appointed full-time official in 1950, and retired in 1976.

Political Affiliations:

George Hamill was among the most prominent anti-partitionist labour politicians in Derry in the 1940s. He first became interested in labour politics in the mid 1930s as a member of a small labour group. Other members of the group included the Finnegans, Mr Finnegan was the director of Magee College; Bateman, a printer who had been at Ruskin College; the Matthews brothers (see below); and the McNulty brothers. George decribed the process in the following way:

I was greatly influenced by a couple of chaps I knocked about with. At that particular time I had no social conscious[ness] at all. I was greatly influenced by two chaps who'd been to England, called McNulty... Their social consciences were well advanced... confirmed socialists. They [had] worked in England as kitchen boys... both them were chefs. I started to get interested. I met John De Courcy Ireland [a well known socialist from Eire who worked in Derry during the Second World War]... he used to load me with all the propaganda. My mother wasn't very social minded or political minded. She didn't like some of the stuff he was sending down to me: she thought it was too extreme.

It was as a result of this social and political awakening that George first became interested in trade unionism, but he did not become an ATGWU activist until he got the job in the Harbour Authority in 1942. After the Second World War, George joined the anti-partitionist Derry Labour Party (DLP). He defected to the Londonderry Labour Party (LDLP) when the leader of the DLP, Paddy Fox, made a pact with the Nationalist Party in the Council elections of 1946. The LDLP was affiliated to the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), and when the latter split over partition in 1949 (see section 2.2) George left the LDLP and helped to set up a local branch of the Irish Labour Party (IrLP). He left the IrLP in the early 1950s because he was disillusioned with electoral defeats, and because he was asked by one of his superiors in the ATGWU to curtail his political activities following complaints from Protestant bus workers (see section 5.2).

Name: Mr MATTHEWS<*>

Year of Birth: 1911

Family Background:

Born in Rosemount Terrace. His parents were both Protestants. His father was an electrician who worked in the telephone exchange and then 'took complete charge' of it. His father died when Mr Matthews was two years old. His mother had also worked worked in the telephone exchange, but gave up her job when she married; she did not return to work when her husband died: 'it simply wasn't done.' His mother was given £1,000 by the telephone company when her husband died, 'a terrific sum.' Mr Matthews had two brothers and one sister.

One brother was a dental mechanic, the sister was a teacher, and the other brother, Fred - who, like Mr Matthews, was a member of the LDLP - worked in a hardware store. Mr Matthews never married. He now lives in a street close to the Bogside.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

Left school at 16. Became an apprentice shirt cutter in Bryce and Weston's factory; he got the apprenticeship through an uncle who knew Mr Bryce. He did not regard shirt cutting as a much sought after job:

there was no choice: after the closure of the shipyard it was very difficult for a boy to get a trade.

After he finished his apprenticeship he became a collar pattern cutter - according to Mr Matthews the most skilled and creative part of the cutting trade in Derry - and was then promoted to 'charge-hand' of the cutting room; altogether he worked in Bryce and Weston's for 20 years. After Bryce and Weston's closed-down in the late 1940s, Mr Matthews helped the son of the original Mr Bryce to set up another factory in Derry. It was financed a Belfast based shirt manufacturer called Faulkner whose son later became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland (Brian Faulkner). This factory closed in the early 1950s: 'a kind of recession set in and Faulkner folded it up because there was no future to it.' Mr Matthews' mother became ill in the mid 1950s and for a year or so he divided his time between a small shirt factory in Muff, working as a free-lance pattern cutter, and looking after his mother (he did not want his sister to break her career as a teacher). After his mother died, Mr Matthews 'ran' a small shirt factory in Derry. It was owned by a businessman, Mr Szilagy, who had come to Derry after the Second World War as a 'displaced person.' Mr Matthews retired in 1976. He never held any formal union office, but he collected ATGWU subscriptions in Bryce and Weston's cutting rooms for many years. He left the ATGWU following his appointment as charge-hand because management did not 'expect' a charge-hand to belong to a union. He joined the NUTGW when he was working in Szilagy's factory (see section 5.2). Mr Matthews could not be described as a NUTGW activist; however, he was very friendly with Charles Ollis, local full-time officer of the NUTGW 1954-58, and tried to persuade other workers in Szilagy's to join the union.

Political Affiliations:

Mr Matthews first became involved in labour politics in the 1930s when he became a member of the same political group to which George Hamill referred above. He later became secretary of both the Foyle Divisional Committee and the Central Committee of the LDLP. Mr Matthews' interest in Labour Politics did not stem from his trade union work; rather, it developed out of a concern that the gerrymander 'lwasn't democracy.' The LDLP faded out in the 1950s, and Mr Matthews retired from active politics.

Name: Mr GORDON^(*)

Year of Birth: 1916

Family Background:

Born in Derry, grew up in a house at the 'Top of the Hill' on the Waterside. Both parents Protestant. His father worked in Derry shipyard, then in 'Wilson's mill', then in a 'Buchanan's pork store'. He was 'idle' for short periods between each of these jobs. Mr Gordon's mother worked in Hamilton's shirt factory before he was born; she stayed at home until he was eight years old and then returned to Hamilton's to work as a smoother. Mr Gordon is a widower and now lives with his daughter and son-in-law on a Protestant housing estate on the Waterside.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

Left school shortly before his fourteenth birthday and immediately started an apprenticeship as a shirt cutter in Hamilton's: his mother 'asked Mr Hamilton and got me a start on 16 May 1930, it was a Friday.' He became a bandknife cutter, and worked in Hamilton's until 1961. He did the same job in Little's factory until 1972. He then left the shirt industry and got a job as a night watchman for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Part of his reason for leaving the shirt industry was that his 'eyesight started to go', but he had been trying to leave for sometime: 'I was clean scundered with my trade, I wanted a change.' As I mentioned in the text (see section 5.3), Mr Gordon described himself as a 'square peg in a round

hole' in the sense that he regarded himself as a 'country man' who enjoyed 'shooting snipe' and fishing:

I should never have been in an inside job, [but] I can't complain: I was really better off than most young fellas in this town. I started with eight shillings and nine pence in 1930... most boys leaving school could go into an office or... a shop as a message boy for five shillings a week and when they were 16 and had to stamp their cards they threw them out. Most of them boys went in the army and they never looked back.

Mr Gordon was a member of the ATGWU all through his working life in the shirt industry, but he never held any union office. He took a keen interest in the union, but his view of trade unionism might be described as instrumental: 'you only join a union to get more money.'

Political Affiliations:

Mr Gordon described himself as someone who 'voted Unionist', but he told me that he had many Catholic friends in his youth (the Top of the Hill area was mixed), and he was still friendly with George Hamill. Moreover, as I noted in chapter eight, he described the Civil Rights Movement as 'the best thing that ever happened to this town... the only thing was that the IRA came behind them.'

The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers

Name: JACK MACGOUGAN

Year of Birth: 1913

Family Background:

Born in the Cregagh area of South Belfast. Both of his parents were Protestants. His father worked in Harland and Wolff shipyard; he never recalled his mother going out to work. He now lives with his wife - 'a cousin of Brian Faulkner' (Prime Minister of Northern Ireland 1971-72) - near Milton Keynes

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

He attended elementary and technical school until the age of 16. He then got a 'summer job' in a plumbing firm, but 'there was no room for an apprentice.' He got a job as a clerk in a Belfast accountancy

firm through a 'family contact' in 1929. He was was appointed Irish regional organiser of the NUTGW in 1945. I explained why he applied for this job and how he got it in section 4.3; here I will give only a summary. His main reason for taking the job was that he thought it would allow more scope for his political activities than working for a firm of accountants. He got the job because he had good experience as a union organiser - he had organised accountancy clerks - and because he knew a lot about the clothing industry: his boss had been clothing and equipment comptroller for Northern Ireland during the Second World War. He subsequently held many official positions in the Irish and British trade union movements. He was a member of the Executive of the ITUC 1950-1969, and was president 1957-58 and 1963-64. In 1968 he was elected general secretary of the NUTGW (I do not know of any other Northern Ireland officers of British trade unions who have achieved this), and he served on the General Council of the TUC from 1970 until his retirement in 1979.

Political Affiliations:

I discussed Jack Macgougan's political career in some detail in section 8.2; here I will only summarise. Jack Macgougan was interested in politics from a very early age: his father was election agent for Jack Beattie, a labour candidate in the first Northern Ireland parliamentary elections in 1925, and Macgoguan, then aged 11 or 12, addressed envelopes and did other campaign chores. After he left school, Macgougan attended lectures organised by the National Council of Labour Colleges; he recalls a lecturer named Jack Dorricot as being particularly influential. In the early 1930s he joined the Socialist Party of Ireland which had been formed out of the Belfast Branches of the Independent Labour Party. The Outdoor Relief Crisis of 1932 (see section 1.2) and the sectarian violence in Belfast in the mid 1930s made a considerable impact on him. In 1935 he was elected secretary of the Socialist Party, and he was selected as a labour candidate for the Oldpark Division in the 1938 Stormont election. He lost the election but considers it to have been a good campaign. The Socialist Party was affiliated to the NILP, and when the former broke up during the Second World War, Macgougan remained a member of the latter. He was elected vice-chairman of the NILP in 1944, and became chairman 1945-46. Macgougan was one of the leading

opponents of the pro-Union elements in the NILP, and he was expelled from the Party in 1948. He had been a member of the IrLP since 1945 by virtue of his position as Irish regional officer of the NUTGW, and he helped to extend the Party to Northern Ireland. He was elected to Belfast Corporation to represent a Falls Road ward in 1949, and remained a member until 1958. He contested the South Down seat in the Westminster election of 1951, but lost. In the late 1950s, Macgougan became disillusioned with local labour politics and devoted an increasing amount of his time and energy to trade unionism rather than the IrLP (see section 8.2). He retired from active politics after he lost his Corporation seat in 1958.

Name: KATHY GALLAGHER<*>

Year of Birth: 1917

Family Background:

Born in the Rosemount area of Derry. Both parents were Catholics; the father was born and grew up in Derry, the mother was born in Liverpool, and returned to Derry with her mother when her father died. Kathy Gallagher's father was an 'engineer', who worked in Derry shipyard ('the yard'), Watt's distillery, and 'ended-up' working on boats in Warrenpoint. Her mother was 'always a housewife.' Miss Gallagher had two sisters and five brothers. Neither Kathy nor her sisters married, and after her parents died Miss Gallagher lived with her sisters, one of whom also worked in the shirt industry. She did not recall her father as being a keen trade unionist, but her mother's brother, William Logue (see chapter three), and her brother, Frank, were both union officials, the former with the NAUL, and the latter with the Post Office Workers' Union.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

Miss Gallagher left school at 14 'as usual [in those days].' She immediately started work in Richard's 'Paragon' factory:

The funny thing is, the manager lived here a few doors from us and was brought up with us as family... and he took us there [to Richard's]. In fact, the other sister started there too... he [the manager] knew the family, was great with mother and that.

She was a 'learner' in the finishing department, and 'graded' from 'putting bones, stiffeners, in collars' to pressing and glossing collars, and then to 'turning collars.' It was while working in Richard's that she first joined the NUTGW 'as an ordinary member.' In 1939 she left Derry to enter a convent in France. The outbreak of the Second World War prevented her from going to France, so she joined a convent in England instead. She enjoyed her work with evacuees and as an 'assistant teacher', but she became ill with a stomach ulcer which was exacerbated by the blitz and returned to Derry to recuperate; she did not complete her novitiate. Back in Derry she worked in a shop, and in a restaurant before returning to Richard's as a 'smoother.' She left that job because it was too heavy and too hot, and became an examiner in Harrison's factory: 'a friend [had] a word with Mr Greenan [a department manager].' She rejoined the NUTGW but did not become active until the 1952 breakaway (see section 6.4). She was elected president of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in 1953, and held the position until 1960. In the late 1960s Miss Gallagher was appointed senior examiner, a job which involved supervising the other examiners. In 1973 she was awarded the British Empire Medal. She was recommended for the award by her employer, and she thinks that it was in recognition of her help in persuading the workforce to accept a move from the old city centre factory to a new premises in an industrial estate on the Waterside, and of her efforts to persuade workers not to strike in support of the political demonstrations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Miss Gallagher felt that some 'nationally minded' members of the NUTGW in Belfast were a 'bit peeved over' her acceptance of the award, and when Macgougan arranged a small party to celebrate the award, Miss Gallagher did not attend. She retired from Harrison's and from union activity in 1974, but continued to work, on a part-time basis, in a small factory on the Waterside for a few years. Miss Gallagher had once thought of attempting to get a full-time position in the NUTGW, but she put it out of her mind because it would have involved travelling and she did not like to be parted from her sisters.

Political Affiliations:

Although brought up in a 'national-minded' household, Miss Gallagher was opposed to the idea of a united Ireland and to its advocates.

However, she never described herself as a Unionist (see section 6.4). She was not a supporter of labour politics, but she was an active member of Derry Trades Council in the 1950s and retains some regard for it: in the early 1980s she loaned her car to members of the Trades Council who were campaigning in a local government election. She is currently very hostile to Sinn Fein, and critical of the SDLP and its leader John Hume: she feels that the latter 'jockeyed for position' in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Name: MARTHA HENDERSON<*>

Year of Birth: 1920

Family Background:

Born in 'Londonderry': Mrs Henderson insisted on the name 'Londonderry' at the beginning of my first interview with her, but she lapsed into using 'Derry' as the interview progressed. Both of her parents were Protestants. Her father was a driver for the Corporation; her mother never undertook paid work: 'her father [Mrs Henderson's grandfather] owned his own business.' She had three sisters and three brothers. Both sisters worked in the shirt industry for a time, both in McCarthy's factory. One sister married an American sailor, the other 'went into catering' in a local hospital. One brother was in the navy, another was a painter and decorator, and the third was an engineer. None of her family were trade union minded.

Education Work History and Trade Union Experience:

Martha Henderson left school at 14 and started work as a 'stamper' in the cutting room of Little's factory on the Waterside. She described the process of getting her first job in the following way:

When you come 14 your mother and father said, 'out and get a job,' and you went then and had an interview at the [factory] door... There was no meeting personnel officers: you met the foreman or forewoman. Mrs Holmes was forewoman in Little's factory, and she just came to the door and [asked], 'what age are you,' and, 'what shool did you go to,' and, 'you start on such and such a date.'

From stamping she went on to button-holing, and worked in Little's

until 1938:

We weren't really made redundant. You went slack... and you might have been on the bru [ie the Labour Exchange] for maybe Monday and Tuesday, and you went in [to work] Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday... because it was only a small concern. You were always expected to go back [to the factory after a spell of unemployment], but then when you went on the bru, you had to go where you were sent.

Martha Henderson was sent to Tillie and Henderson's where she worked as a button-holer until her marriage in 1945. Her husband had 'served his time' as a motorcycle mechanic, and spent some time in England before he met Martha. He worked as a bread salesman in Derry for 31 years before getting a job in DuPont's synthetic fibre factory. They had no children, and Mrs Henderson returned to work in 1948 as a button-holer in McCarthy's factory. Mrs Henderson first joined the NUTGW soon after she started work in McCarthy's. She joined the Clothing Workers' Union (CWU) at the time of the 1952 breakaway, but returned to the NUTGW when the the CWU transferred to the ITGWU. She began to take an active interest in trade unionism in 1953. Her interest was stimulaed by the introduction of work study in McCarthy's and a suspicion of her union official's (Stephen McGonagle) enthusiasm for it. She joined the Branch Committee of the NUTGW in the mid 1950s, and was elected Branch president in 1960. In the late 1960s Mrs Henderson became a supervisor in charge of the '50 girls' who did 'front stitching, heming, patent turning, pocketing, and button-holing.' She left McCarthy's, and the NUTGW, in 1971 to take a job as the manageress of a canteen in the DuPont factory. Her reason for leaving McCarthy's was that she was 'fed-up': she had been working in the factory a long time; felt that she was being overworked as a supervisor - 'if anybody was out [off work] they were sending for me to red-up the place [do the absentee's work]'; and disliked the man who was appointed manager of her department,

this boy thought he was the bees nees... he wouldn't let me run the line at all... him and I had a couple of words over it.

Interestingly, the department manager concerned was the 'Orange man' who had been abused by ITGWU members during the strike in 1961 (see section 7.3). Mrs Henderson retired in 1980. She now lives with her husband on the Waterside.

Political Affiliations:

Mr Henderson describes herself as a Unionist. However, she might better be described as a liberal Unionist: she defended Macgougan's right to articulate his left-wing, anti-partitionist views in public (see section 7.2), and took part in the civil rights demonstration in Derry on 5 October 1968 (see section 8.2). Her Unionism has hardened in the years since 1968. She now regards the CRM as having been a stalking-horse for the IRA, and thinks that Derry Catholics 'brought it [poor housing and unemployment] on themselves.'

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
(Re-established in Derry in 1953)

Name: STEPHEN McGONAGLE

Year of Birth: 1914

Family Background:

Born in Derry. From a Catholic background. His father was from West Donegal, and worked as a master plumber in a Protestant-owned firm in the Fountain area. His mother was not in paid employment. The father was a trade unionist, but not politically active. McGonagle is married and still lives in Derry.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

Stephen McGonagle left school at 14, and served his time as a plumber. He was appointed organising secretary of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in 1947 (see section 6.2), but this was not his first experience of trade unionism: he had previously been president of the local Branch of the plumbers' union, and secretary of Derry Trades Council. He resigned from NUTGW in 1952, established the CWU, and transferred to the ITGWU in 1953. He was Derry Branch secretary of the ITGWU from 1953, and became North-West district organiser in the early 1970s. He was the first chairman of the NIC-ICTU, and was president of the ICTU 1972-1973. He has also held various public offices: he was vice-chairman of the Development Commission which replaced Londonderry Corporation, 1969-1971, and he was appointed

Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Complaints ('Ombudsman') in 1974.

Political Affiliations

McGonagle joined the DLP in the 1940s. He defected to the LDLP in 1946 because, like Hamill (see above), he felt that the leader of the DLP, was too close to the Nationalist Party. He left the LDLP in the split of 1948-49 and helped to establish a branch of the IrLP in Derry. After resigning from the NUTGW, McGonagle devoted himself to building-up the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. In the Stormont elections of 1958 and 1962, McGonagle stood as an 'Independent Labour' candidate against Eddie McAteer, Nationalist Party leader, in the Foyle constituency; he was defeated on both occasions (see section 2.2 and 8.2). Although he always remained within the anti-partitionist camp, McGonagle was highly critical of the Nationalist Party for emphasising the border to the exclusion of social issues, and was concerned not to alienate Protestant workers. This stance created suspicion among some Protestants and Catholics (see section 7.3). McGonagle retired from electoral politics after the 1962 defeat, but he is currently a member of Seanad Eireann (the Senate of the Republic of Ireland).

Name: SEAMUS QUINN

Year of Birth: 1925

Family Background:

Born in Derry, but both of his parents were originally from Donegal, and Quinn regards himself as a 'Donegal man too.' From a Catholic background. His father worked as a 'railwayman' in Strabane and Donegal, and was

47 years a member of a trade union, the NUR [The National Union of Railwaymen] and ASLEF [Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen].

Quinn is evidently proud of his father's union record, but he did not think that this influenced him much: his father died when Quinn was 14. He does not remember his mother ever having paid employment.

Quinn now lives with his wife in the Rosemount area. His wife used to work in the Rosemount factory.

Education and Work Experience:

Attended Saint Columb's College (the main Catholic boys' grammar school in Derry) until he was 16. He was appointed assistant organiser of the CWU in 1953, and transferred to the ITGWU in the same year. Prior to his appointment as a union organiser he was a clerk in the Northern Ireland Transport Board in Belfast. He retired in the late 1970s.

Political Affiliations:

Quinn was McGonagle's election agent in the 1962 contest (LS: 23 May 1962). In the 1967 Stormont elections he challenged Eddie McAteer in his own right (see section 8.2). He stood as an 'Independent Labour' candidate and described his purpose to me in the following way:

I was looking in the beginning of the 1960s - before these troubles began - looking for rapprochement between the Unionist and anti-Unionists as far as it could be obtained, and looking for [the] labour principle, but I wasn't prepared to say 'no, no,' to everything the Unionists said'

Quinn agreed that anti-communism was strong in Derry, and agreed that it was something which was used against McGonagle at election time; however, he did not suffer in the same way:

No, it never came out against me because I had a different background... I went to the local Catholic grammar school... but he [McGonagle] had an earlier background in the Northern Ireland Labour Party... that was thrown against [him].

Quinn took part in the civil rights march on 5 October 1968, and claims to have been elected to the Derry Citizens Action Committee, but denied his place by a manipulation of the vote.

Name: Miss COSGRAVE<*>

Year of Birth: 1912

Family Background:

Miss Cosgrave was born in William Street in the Bogside, and reared in the Rosemount area. Both her parents were from Derry and both were Catholics. Her father, who was a cabinetmaker and undertaker,

died when she was one year old; her mother, who worked in the Rosemount factory, died when Miss Cosgrave was 11 years old. She was 'brought up' by her grandmother. She now lives in the Bogside. She never married.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

Miss Cosgrave left school at 14 and went to work as a 'message girl' in the Rosemount factory. In between 'doing messages' she worked in the laundry and learnt to starch and shape shirt collars.

I don't know how long I was in the laundry, [but] I was moved from that job to the boxing [of finished shirts]; then I was moved to dispatch clerk.

As a dispatch clerk, Miss Cosgrave was responsible for preparing orders and stock-taking for the collar cutting room. She joined the 'Tailor and Garment Workers' [Union] in 1930, 'if not before'; became a shop steward in the early 1940s; and joined the Branch Committee in the late 1940s. She supported the breakaway, and became a member of the Derry Branch Committee of the ITGWU. In the early 1960s Rosemount factory was bought over several times in succession. There was some upheaval in the management structure, and Miss Cosgrave became a 'manageress over three rooms [or] departments.' She was proud of her achievement: she told me that it was 'not usual' for a woman to become a manageress, and that 'I went in as a message girl and rose up to manageress.' However, her appointment as manageress brought her a considerable amount of regret and trouble. Firstly, she had to give up her trade union membership and her involvement in the Wages Council and social security 'tribunals' which derived from her status as a senior shop steward in the ITGWU. She resented Seamus Quinn for putting his wife 'in my place [in the union without] notifying me.' Secondly, she was the victim of a smear campaign orchestrated by one or two Protestant workers who wrote an anonymous letter to the factory owners claiming that she was showing favouritism towards Catholic workers. Thirdly, she was made redundant in 1966 because Mr Harrison (of Harrison's factory), who had taken over-all control of the Rosemount factory, wanted to replace her with a male manager. She took her case to an industrial tribunal and was awarded £420 redundancy pay. She does not regard this to have been adequate recompense:

foolishly enough [I] conducted this myself; I should have used the union, but I was so broken-hearted at the time

[that] I couldn't have talked to anybody about it... But the reason I didn't go to the union at the time was I was very angry at Seamus Quinn.

I cannot corroborate her story except by noting that when I interviewed Mr Harrison - long before I contacted Miss Cosgrave - he told me that each room in his factory had three or four charge-hands, one forewoman, and a male manager, and that he found women worked better with a male manager; he added: 'I'm sure that breaches the Sex Discrimination Act but it's a fact of life.' Miss Cosgrave got a job as an examiner in McIntyre, Hogg, and Marsh's factory through a friend, and worked there until she retired in the early 1970s.

Political Affiliations:

Miss Cosgrave never voted nationalist: she claims to have 'voted labour all my life because I was interested in labour and thought they were doing a good job.' It is unlikely that Miss Cosgrave voted labour all her life for the simple reason that in most elections in Derry she did not have the choice of a labour candidate. However, she was an ardent admirer of McGonagle, supported the IrLP, and voted for McGonagle in 1958 and 1962.

Name: Miss McMORRIS<*>

Year of Birth: c1926

Family Background:

Miss McMorris was born in Rosemount. Her Parents were both Catholics, and both from Derry, but she told me that her father's father - 'my grandfather McMorris' - was a Protestant from Belfast, and that her mother's mother was also from Belfast. Her father was a joiner and a member of the 'Carpenter's [Union]'. Her mother was a button-holer in Tillie and Henderson, but retired from paid employment when she married:

Joiners' wages were only a pittance... [but] I expect my father, being the man he was, he just wanted somebody there for [to cook] his meals. I don't think it was anything to do with swanking-it, that he had plenty of money, for he hadn't.

Miss McMorris has two sisters. She never married.

Education, Work History, and Trade Union Experience:

Miss McMorris left school and got job in Harrison's factory when she was 14. She did not want to leave school or to work in a shirt factory: 'I was thinking of nursing and different things, not the factory.' But her eldest sister was at 'college' and her parents could not afford to finance Miss McMorris's education, so her mother spoke to a family friend and neighbour who was a manager in Harrison's, and he got Miss McMorris started in 'a desk job... making up the wages [for workers in Harrison's].' Miss McMorris 'loved' her job as a wages clerk, but her mother regarded it as an unskilled and insecure job, and persuaded her daughter to take a job as a shirt folder:

She said that if I wanted to stay at that [desk job] she would still have to pay for night school, for I couldn't have walked into another office and say, 'well, I did accounts'... I needed to have the qualifications... I was denied alot of things. I really hated [factory work]... [but] my mother went to the manager and told him that she didn't want me at that [desk job]... and he put me to folding shirts... [it] was this idea that you have to have a trade.

Miss McMorris worked as a folder in Harrison's until she transferred to the Rosemount factory in the early 1970s. In the mid-1970s she, along with the rest of the Rosemount factory workforce, was transferred to a more modern premises in the same area. She continued to yearn for a desk job and had hopes of getting a job as a personnel officer in the new factory, but it closed in 1981, and Miss McMorris has not been in paid employment since then. Miss McMorris joined the NUTGW in the 1940s (see section 4.4), supported the breakaway in 1952, and joined the ITGWU. She first became a shop steward in the mid 1950s. She was reluctant at first:

To be quite honest I never was [interested in becoming active in the union]. It was the bother it entailed. I was interested in so far as I used to say, 'I wish I was in a job where you didn't have to force management.' It [trade unionism] was very necessary... I might say I didn't like it, but the fact is you couldn't have worked in a factory without a union... because they would have done anything with you: wrapped you up in a parcel and sent you away somewhere! It was awful, the humiliation. They think they're God some of those managers... and then I lacked [education] - maybe it was my own fault - it was my 40s and 50s when I began to get a bit educated, academically wise.

She decided to accept the post of shop steward because,

There was nobody else to take it, and some friends of mine

- it was the shop steward - said, 'I've already said to Stephen McGonagle [that Miss McMorris was the new steward],' and I said, 'I wish you hadn't have done that,' but I says, 'well I'll do it 'till somebody comes along.' Nobody came along.

Miss McMorris became a member of the Branch Committee of the ITGWU in the late 1950s and 1960s. She never enjoyed 'the bother' that being a shop steward entailed, but she felt that her involvement in union affairs had added to her confidence and education.

Political Affiliations:

Miss McMorris's father was a firm nationalist, and she grew up as a nationalist with a strong suspicion of communism and left-wing ideas. Nevertheless, in the 1958 Stormont election she voted for Stephen McGonagle rather than Eddie McAteer, the leader of the Nationalist Party. Today she supports the Social and Democratic Labour Party - the Party which supplanted the old Nationalist Party as the Party for which most Catholics vote. But Miss McMorris now considers herself to be more open-minded and analytical about politics. This open-mindedness seems to be partly the result of her experience as a trade union activist. For example, she explained why few ITGWU members in the shirt industry supported Stephen McGonagle in the 1958 and 1962 elections in the following way:

Well, you see, nationalism very strong, I knew people [who] said, 'Stephen's a very good man and I'm with him whole heartedly as a trade union member, but no, never [vote for him].' And that's the way they said it - a bit like the present day Unionist and 'No Surrender!' type of thing. You can't override it [nationalism]: just say I'm a nationalist and I always will be a nationalist even though it's a stalemate. The both sides are stalemate and you could go on like that. It's the very fact that even though I mightened have been educated enough I knew that much. Nothing seemed to move, you just voted and that was all: to show strength and that was all it was, nothing moved. It's only by going to [union] conferences that then I began to say, 'well, why not [vote labour]: all this body of people that I could see spouting at rostrums and [they] could make a change.' Well, then it came and somebody asked me - the last couple of elections - why did I vote [SDLP]. Well, there's nobody to vote [for]... Alliance [the Alliance Party] doesn't have any labour ideas. John Hume, even [with] socialist [sic] and labour in the Party [name, ie Social Democratic and Labour Party], now, they [the SDLP] mightened come up to all your expectations. He [Hume] mightened be a full labour man, true enough; he mightened be a good socialist, true enough; but it's [ie the SDLP] the nearest to labour - no one else. The Northern Ireland

[Labour] Party never gets in [gets elected]... it's pathetic like. I don't know what The Workers' Party - are they republican or what?

However, it is worth reminding the reader that Miss McMorris was strongly critical of the young revolutionary socialists who initiated civil rights protests in Derry in the late 1960s (see section 8.2).

TABLE 2: Signatories to the Londonderry Shirt Manufacturers' Federation Statement to the Boundary Commission, 1925.

Firms Incorporated Under Company's act	Firms Owned as Private Partnerships	Firms Owned by Single Employers
McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh	Harrison	S.M. Kennedy
Bryce & Weston	Lloyd, Attree & Smith	Alexander Mills
McCarthy	E. Richards	Burnside
Tillie and Henderson	J. Hamilton & Sons	W.J. Little
Lawry and Porter	A.B. Grant (Rosemount Factory)	S. Wilson
Young & Rochester (Ebrington Factory)	Leinster Bros	D.A. Mooney
Neely and Wilkinson		Maitland & Montgomery
		W. Jameson
		W. Burns
		Montcrieff
		J. Anderson
		J.J. Carton

Source: Written submission to the Boundary Commission by Londonderry Shirt Manufacturers' Federation (1926; PRONI MIC 288, Reel 11). Only five members of the Federation did not sign the statement: Porter and Co., A. Mills and Co., Desmond and Co., Austen Moore, and R. R. Birch and Sons.

TABLE 5: Numbers of Members in the 'Londonderry' Branch and the 'Londonderry (Factory Workers)' Branch of the ASTT 1914-1919 (The latter paid union dues in one of the three 'female' membership categories; the former were tailors all of whom paid dues in the 'male' categories).

Year	Londonderry Branch	Londonderry (Factory Workers) Branch,
1914	111	100
1915	92	500
1916	85	200
1917	130	3354
1918	125	3464
1919	no figure given	3352

Source: 'Tabular Statement of Number of Members, Balances Held by Each Branch, Rates Per Hour, and Dates Report Received', in the Yearly Report of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses 1914-1919. Until 1912 the report lists only a 'Londonderry Branch'. In 1913 a 'Londonderry (Factory Workers)' Branch is listed separately from the 'Londonderry Branch' with a separate address and its own secretary; Kath. Young. However there is no entry for 'Londonderry (Factory Workers)' Branch in the 'Tabular Statement of Numbers of Members...' for 1913.)

TABLE 6: Numbers of Members in the 'Londonderry' and 'Londonderry (Factory Workers)' Branches of the ASTT 1920-1931 (1931 is the last year for which such figures were published),

Year	Londonderry Branch	Londonderry (Factory Workers) Branch
1920	87	200
1921	84	115
1922	65	124
1923	84	253
1924	67	700
1925	64	755
1926	64	810
1927	52	819
1928	45	770
1929	50	740
1930	47	216
1931	48	317

Source: 'Tabular Statement of Number of Members, Balances Held by Each Branch, Rates Per Hour, and Dates Reports Received', in the Yearly Report of the Amalganated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses 1920-1931.

TABLE 7: Estimated Numbers Employed and Numbers of NUTGW Members in the Various Centres of Shirt and Pyjama Manufacture in Northern Ireland in March 1948.

Area	Number Employed	Membership	Target
Derry	6,750	3,300	4,300
Belfast	1,250	450	850
Coleraine	370	320	370
Ballymena	120	-	120
Strabane	400	150	300
Omagh	60	-	60
Glenarm	100	-	100
Cloughmills	100	-	100

Source: Typescript document in the NUTGW's Belfast office, dated 12 March 1948.

TABLE 8: Numbers of NUTGW Members in Derry Shirt Factories in Each Quarter of the Year 1970

Factory	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter
McCarthy's	316	227	211	275
Tillie & Henderson	118	130	148	167
Harrison's	168	169	150	175
McCandless	22	34	42	49
Cedric	11	-	-	-
Hunter	23	21	17	24
Bayview	88	5	25	53
Saracen	49	95	101	104
Sedgley	7	7	7	-
Hamilton's	22	25	15	-
Little	-	50	44	54
Brookhaven	-	90	90	94
Tailors	17	2	-	2
Sundries	-	3	5	3
Totals	841	849	855	1000

Source: NUTGW Quarterly Membership Report, manuscript document in headquarters of NUTGW, London.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1: TRADE UNIONISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND: A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

- (1) I have adopted the practice of spelling the noun Union - referring to the political and legislative Union of Ireland with Britain - and its derivatives, Unionism and Unionist, with a capital 'U'. This is to avoid confusion with derivatives of the compound noun trade union. In the latter case the word union is only capitalised when it appears in the title of a specific organisation, or in a chapter heading.
- (2) Of course, there are other studies in which trade unionism in Northern Ireland, or a particular aspect of it, is discussed in some detail, but none has the theoretical or historical scope of Rolston's: McCarthy (1973 and 1977) and Boyd (1972) are historical narratives; Robertson and Sams (1976) is a survey of full-time trade union officers; Bleakley's article (1953) is descriptive; Boyd (1984) is a polemic; and Morrissey and Morrissey (1979) are primarily concerned with strategic questions.
- (3) Gibbon (1975: 4-6) explains the reasoning behind his adoption of a structuralist approach to the study of Ulster Unionism. The historiography of Unionism - as represented by such writers as Beckett (1966), Lyons (1973), and Buckland (1973) - is, he writes, characterised by a preoccupation with the 'mentalities' and motivations of the people involved. He identifies real methodological problems with this approach; in particular the failure to identify 'the determinants of... action.' However, his response is also theoretically inadequate because in his concern to
reconstruct an account of the social arrangements
which provided Unionism's structural foundation... and

to identify the principal ways in which the social arrangements produced [sic] the political and ideological elements out of which Unionism was constructed

human agency is excised.

I am also reminded of a criticism of Patterson voiced by the poet John Hewitt at an Irish Labour History Society (ILHS) conference in 1981. Patterson had been talking about 'Walkerism', the political legacy of William Walker - a leading member of the Belfast labour movement at the turn of the century. Hewitt responded in the following terms:

Walker wasn't an "ism". He was a man. He lived down our street. I used to see him going to work. He wore a high white collar. (see Fortnight, 254, September 1987).

- (4) I lived in Derry for 12 consecutive months between March 1982 and March 1983. I have visited the city on innumerable occasions since then.
- (5) I later found the minute books of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW and one of its antecedents, the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses (ASTT), in the Belfast home of a researcher who had preceded me. These minute books covered the period 1924-1961. As will become apparent, the minute books were to prove an invaluable source.
- (6) The person concerned was Stephen McGonagle. His reluctance to be tape-recorded is probably linked to the fact that, although retired from active trade unionism, he is a member of Seanad Eireann (the senate of the Republic of Ireland), and, as such, a public figure. Moreover, for reasons which will become apparent, he was undoubtedly more precious about his past than most of my respondents. I carried out two interviews with him. On each occasion I took notes of what he said during the interviews and transcribed them shortly afterwards. I will use material derived from both of these interviews in subsequent chapters, but because they were not recorded, and because of

his general caution I do not quote as extensively from him as from other respondents.

CHAPTER 2: DERRY/LONDONDERRY AND ITS SHIRT INDUSTRY 1920-1968

- (1) The minutes of Derry Trades Council prior to the late 1960s have been lost.
- (2) At a meeting organised by Sinn Fein in Derry in 1917, and which was attended by several delegates to the annual conference of the ITUC which was held in Derry in that year, one speaker talked of a partnership between Sinn Fein and the Irish labour movement and said,
it would be a revelation, even in labour circles in Derry, to know the real attitude of Irish Labour, accustomed as Derry has been to hear its labour leaders declare that the labour gospel meant to know no country.
He added that the resolutions passed at the conference 'would convince Derry labour of that fallacy.' (DJ: 10 August 1917).
- (3) One of my sample of respondents, a Protestant shirt cutter named Mr Matthews, was secretary of the LDLP in the 1940s, and he recalled, with some bitterness, writing several letters to Churchill protesting about the gerrymander; he received no reply.
- (4) In the course of my fieldwork I attended a crowded debate between Gerry Adams and Father Des Wilson on the subject of socialism and republicanism in Ireland. After the meeting I went for a drink with its organiser, a local Sinn Fein activist, who expressed a certain incredulity with the success of the meeting: he felt that a debate on socialism would not have been possible, or at least, not so well attended, 20 years before.

- (5) In 1986 I attended a meeting of the Ulster Clubs - a loyalist organisation set up to oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement - in Belfast. Alan Wright, one of the main organisers of the Ulster Clubs, told the meeting that he had addressed a similar meeting in Derry several nights before; he referred to the siege of 1689 and spoke with reverence of the stoical resolve of the people living in the Fountain area: the Fountain is the only Protestant working class area on the mainly Catholic west bank of the Foyle.
- (6) One of the provisions of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty was for a Boundary Commission to be established to review the boundary between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State (Lyons, 1973: 433-438). This provision was put into effect in 1925. Various interest groups submitted written statements to the Commission, and the representatives of some groups were interviewed. The SMF submitted a general written statement, and two of the manufacturers who had signed the document were interviewed: Mr R. P. Harrison of Harrison and Co., and Mr J .J. McCarthy of McCarthy and Co. These two men also submitted individual written statements. Unless stated otherwise, all references to the Boundary Commission in the text relate to the Boundary Commission Papers (1926: MIC 288, Reel 11) which are held by the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).
- (7) According to my respondents it was not until 1941 that production and employment in the industry began to expand.
- (8) The market for ready-made shirts developed when the stiff fronted shirt came into vogue: stiff fronts were difficult to make at home (Grew, 1987: 23).
- (9) Flax spinning had been mechanised and the industry as a whole was becoming concentrated in the South of Ulster (Grew, 1987: 26).
- (10) The local solicitor who kept the minutes of the SMF did not respond to my persistent requests to see them even though I had

obtained permission to do so from the then chairman of the federation.

- (11) My information on Harrison's and McCarthy's is culled from interviews which I conducted with Arthur Harrison, retired managing director of Harrison's, and Richard Smallwoods, retired general manager of McCarthy's. Neither interview was tape-recorded, but in both cases I made notes as my respondents talked.
- (12) One of the women in my sample of union officials and activists, Miss Cosgrave, became a manageress. Her case was an exception which, to some extent, proves the rule; to understand why see Appendix 1.

CHAPTER 3: THE EARLY HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM AND THE STRIKE OF 1920

- (1) Complete collections of the annual reports of the ASTT and monthly Journal of the ASTT are held in the head office of the NUTGW in London. The latter holds copies of the monthly journal of the UGW, but only from 1926. The original title of the latter was The Garment Worker, it changed to The Tailor and Garment Worker in 1932, and reverted to The Garment Worker in 1936; I refer to it throughout simply as the Garment Worker or abbreviate it to GW. The library of the British Trade Union Congress holds some copies of the Garment Worker between 1923 and 1936; so far as I know, no other library holds copies from an earlier date.
- (2) I am grateful to Theresa Moriarty for this information.
- (3) McCarron served on the the Parliamentary Committee of the ITUC from its formation in 1894 until 1910 (Greaves, 1982: 49). He was a supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party and, as such, was part of the political tradition which predominated in the

ITUC until the rise of Irish separatism after 1910. McCarthy (1977: 16-17) describes him as, 'an impressive Redmondite who had little patience with Larkin, Socialism, or Sinn Fein.'

- (4) My interview with O'Donnell was not tape-recorded, but I noted his answers to my questions during the interview. I carried out one tape-recorded interview with McCorkell. I subsequently spoke to him several times on the phone. I have included McCorkell as part of my sample of respondents, see Appendix 1 for further details of his biography.
- (5) Incidentally, the minutes refer to an appended report on the 1920 strike; however, no such report is attached to the PRONI file.
- (6) My interview with James Hamilton was not tape-recorded, but I noted his answers to my questions during the interview.
- (7) This is possibly a reference to the fact that Irish railway workers were on strike against the movement of munitions for the British security forces at the same time as the cutters were on strike, and that the ITUC voted (on 2 August 1920) to suspend all wage movements so that all trade union funds could be put at the disposal of the railway workers. The latter resolution was the reason which the Derry Branch of the ITGWU gave for not resisting a cut in wages for the workers in Watt's distillery in November 1920 (DJ: 8 and 10 June 1921, see section 3.4 of this thesis).
- (8) The Watchword of Labour (18 September 1920) reports that O'Donnell enrolled workers in Derry's two flour mills just in time for them to participate in a conference on a national wage demand.

CHAPTER 4: THE DECLINE AND GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONISM AMONG WOMEN
SHIRTMAKERS 1920-1952

- (1) Incidentally, the pattern of decline and growth in trade union membership described in this chapter makes some sense of the claim, made by a group of local historians, that, 'the trade unions started to appear in the factories in the 1930's; although it was the 1940s before they were organised properly.' (Londonderry Teachers' Centre and North West Historical Society, N. D. c1979: 52).
- (2) Trade union density 'expresses the proportion of trade unionists in a given constituency in relation to potential membership' (Poole, 1984: 114), ie actual membership divided by potential membership multiplied by 100.
- (3) Henceforth material culled from the Minutes of the Londonderry Branch of the NUTGW will be referred to simply as the 'Minutes'.
- (4) Clegg (1976: 12-28) lists government policy towards trade unionism in a particular country as a significant influence on trade union density in that country. The Stormont Government refused to recognise the ITUC (to which the NUTGW was affiliated) because it had its headquarters in the Republic of Ireland, a foreign country. None of my respondents mentioned this as a factor. Moreover, lest the reader get the mistaken impression that relations between the Government of Northern Ireland and particular unions like the NUTGW were implacably hostile, it is worth pointing out that trade union representatives participated in various statutory bodies - for instance, the NUTGW sent representatives to the Shirt Making Trade Board - and that the Journal of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses (December 1929) published an article entitled 'Northern Ireland - An Ideal Centre for New Industry' by the Right Honourable J. M. Andrews, Minister of Labour for Northern Ireland.

- (5) I am able to demonstrate that there was a change in the attitude or policy of Derry shirt manufacturers to trade unionism between the 1930s and the 1940s. The question of what was behind this change is interesting and important, but difficult to answer without having had access to the minutes of the SMF. In any case it is not directly relevant to this thesis and is not, therefore, pursued here.
- (6) The women concerned, I shall refer to her as Margaret, recounted this episode from her life during an interview with me. The interview was not tape-recorded but I took notes as she talked. The essentials of her story were confirmed by one of her friends whom I met by chance.
- (7) Michael McGuinness, Community History and Heritage Project.
- (8) To give added weight to the significance of this argument, it is worth pointing out that Derry Trades Council complained that one of the firms which located in Derry in the late 1950s - Birmingham Sound Reproducers - was employing too many women (DJ: 12 October 1961). In fact, Birmingham Sound Reproducers employed only 150 women in a workforce of nearly 1,100 (DJ: 18 October 1960). Shirt manufacturers also complained about the numbers of women employed by new industries: they were concerned about increasing competition between employers in the female labour market (Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission, 1972).
- (9) It is worth noting that Miss Gallagher said she often used the argument that many families were dependent on the wages of shirtmakers in negotiations with management.
- (10) I do not want to anticipate the next chapter, but it is worth pointing out that Catholic women resented the religious imbalance in shirt cutting and management more than they resented the fact that both jobs were male dominated.

- (11) The FEA, since its formation in 1976, has commissioned research on various aspects of inequality between Catholics and Protestants in the Northern Ireland labour market. This research has drawn attention to factors other than active discrimination which can give rise to imbalances in the proportions of Catholics and Protestants in particular workforces. The geographical location of factories is one such factor.

When different social groups display patterns of residential concentration, then location of employment can critically determine the accessibility of jobs to the respective groups... this accessibility will be in terms of the actual costs in terms of transport and time (in relation to available wage levels) and in contemporary Belfast, whether location requires crossing sectarian boundaries. (Cormack et al, 1980: 37).

However, in the light of examples of,

sources of employment located in areas which are comprised of one social group where no member of that social group is employed in that particular establishment (1980: 37),

Cormack et al suggest that a more important factor is the tendency for many firms to recruit workers through informal networks; that is, through recommendations by existing employees or by word of mouth. Given that informal networks in Northern Ireland mainly operate between co-religionists, this method of recruitment tends to perpetuate patterns of segregation and inequality. Several of the retired shirt factory managers whom I interviewed attested the importance of recommendations from existing employees in the recruitment of new staff. A glance at the work histories of each of the shirt workers in my sample of respondents (see Appendix 1) provides further evidence that informal networks were a significant - though not the only - method of recruitment in the Derry shirt industry.

The FEA has noted, but not systematically investigated, another mechanism whereby patterns of religious segregation in employment may be reproduced: 'once a firm has a reputation for having workers of one religious persuasion, it may discourage members of the other persuasions from applying for work'

(Cormack et al, 1980: 11). Two Catholic shirt workers whom I met in the course of my research indicated that they would have found it difficult to work in McCarthy's factory, and Quinn, as I have already noted, expressed the view that Catholic workers would not have considered going for a job in a factory, such as Hamilton's, which was identified with the Protestant community because they would have considered it to be pointless: 'they wouldn't employ you.' Mr Matthews told me that a Catholic would have been made to feel uncomfortable in McCarthy's - he suggested that if a Catholic woman left her machine she might return to find her thread broken. Miss Gallagher, on the other hand, told me that one of her sisters had worked in McCarthy's for years and that she 'had come to no harm.'

- (12) Interview with the general manager of Harrison's in 1983. The interview was not tape-recorded, but I made notes of what he said as he said it.
- (13) None of my respondents remembered this man; some told me that 'Kilgore' was a Catholic name, but most thought it was Protestant.

CHAPTER 5: MALE SHIRT CUTTERS AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NUTGW AND THE ATGWU 1920-1952: THE POLITICS OF SEX, SKILL, AND RELIGION

- (1) I conducted one interview with Mr McDonald and two interviews with Mr Nelson. None of the interviews were tape-recorded, but I took notes of what my respondents were saying as they said it.
- (2) The minute book of the Cutters' Committee of the Derry Branch of the ATGWU includes minutes from meetings held between 1950 and 1952. No other minutes or records relating to this Committee survive: I was told by a current ATGWU official that

many records were destroyed or thrown away when the union moved to their present offices.

- (3) In George Hamill's view, Ryan's interpretation of the 1932 agreement was the correct one. He recalled the history of the agreement in the following way:

There was a big row [when shirt cutters defected to the ATGWU] 'cause our union was breaking the Bridlington agreement. The row ended up with Ernest Bevin coming to Derry that was in 19 ah [hesitation], somewhere about say, the middle '30s. I remember a big meeting he had in the Guildhall - he had a general meeting of the trade unionists as well - but that [ie the row between ATGWU and the NUTGWU] was one of the specific things he came for. They resolved the thing by drawing up an agreement that we were allowed to keep the cutters that were transferred over to us, but any further recruitment in the factories after that would be the prerogative of the Tailor and Garment Workers' union. But as you know all these agreements they're alright on paper, but they never work out.

The fact that Ryan's interpretation of the 1932 agreement was probably the correct one makes the cutters defiance of it all the more remarkable.

- (4) Dockers struck and marched into the city centre when two of their colleagues were arrested following an Anti-Partition League Rally in Derry on Saint Patrick's Day, 1952 (see Farrell, 1980: 203).
- (5) Trubenising is a chemical process whereby a 'stiff and 'semi-stiff' collars were made by emersing collars in a solvent which fused the front cloth, the back cloth, and the interlining which made up the collar. It reduced the number of components which went into making a collar, and obviated the need for the washing, starching, shaping, and polishing which had previously been necessary to achieve the desired finish.
- (6) See Census of Northern Ireland 1926, County and County Borough of Londonderry (1928: 51), and Census of the Population of Northern Ireland 1951, County and County Borough of Londonderry (1954: 69). The other census reports do not list cutting as a separate occupation.

CHAPTER 6: THE SECESSION OF THE DERRY BRANCH OF THE NUTGW 1952-1954:
TRADITIONAL IRISH MARXISM STOOD ON ITS HEAD

- (1) I have not had access to the minutes of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW in the period immediately before the breakaway. The last meeting in the first minute book of the ASTT/NUTGW was reported in July 1951. The new minute book begins with a meeting in November 1953: the first formal meeting of a new, reconstituted, Branch Committee of the NUTGW. Presumably, the minutes of NUTGW Branch Committee meetings held in the period between July 1951 and September 1952 were removed from the offices of the NUTGW when the Branch Committee resigned. The Garment Worker did not report the breakaway. Indeed the only mention of it is in Macgougan's column of 'Irish Notes' in the December 1952 edition. This adds nothing new to our knowledge of the situation.
- (2) I spoke to Eamonn McCann twice: once in person and once on the telephone. On the latter occasion I noted his responses to my questions as he made them.
- (3) I interviewed Mrs McMenamin once. The interview was tape-recorded, but during part of the interview my tape-recorder malfunctioned.
- (4) Female activists did not usually issue statements to the press. The only exceptions were three letters published in the Derry Journal. The first two (DJ: 21 October 1953) were from 'factory girls' defending the ballot on affiliation to the ITGWU. The third (DJ: 4 December 1953) was from Sarah McGeady, an ITGWU shop steward in Harrison's criticising the Trades Council's stance on the breakaway and defending McGonagle's record as a trade union official.
- (5) The Derry Journal followed the nationalist tradition of using the term 'six Counties' rather than Northern Ireland or Ulster: the state of Northern Ireland includes only six of the nine Counties of Ulster.

- (6) It is interesting to note that this was not the first time that union organisers who were not from Derry were subject to this kind of attack. One of the criticisms of the Derry Branch of the ITGWU following the dispute in Watt's distillery in 1921 was that its organisers were not from Derry: Ridgeway was denounced as a 'Belfast Orangeman' (DJ: 15 June 1921), and ITGWU organisers were said to have 'came to Derry' and exploited sectarian tensions (DJ: 22 June 1921; see section 3.4). In 1891, opponents of trade unionism in the shirt factories had criticised Eleanor Aveling as an 'outsider' who was disturbing what had hitherto been good relations between employers and employees (DS: 20 November 1891; see section 3.2).

Hostility to outsiders who came to Derry as a political or union organisers was not confined to Catholic or Nationalist Derry. For example, Mr Matthews expressed some resentment of Macgougan's role in trade unionism and labour politics in Derry: 'Macgougan operated from Belfast, and outside Belfast Macgougan wasn't interested in anything at all, [so far as he was concerned] Derry was only a two-pen' ha'penny place'.

- (7) I interviewed Francis Maguire once. The interview was not tape-recorded, but I took notes as she answered my questions.
- (8) It is worth noting in this connection that in the case of one of the breakaways studied by Lerner (1961: 119) - that of the United Clothing Workers' Union established in the East End of London in the 1930s - London Trades Council issued warning about
- the possibility of members' daughters and relatives being used to build up a new organisation that cannot be recognised by the TUC.
- (9) Maxwell was the leader of the Nationalist Party in Derry from the mid 1930s until 1953 when the party nominated McAteer for the Foyle constituency. Maxwell stood as an independent candidate; the contest was bitter (see Curran, 1986: 12-13).

- (10) Macgougan told me that O'Connor had stood as a Clann na Poblachta candidate in an election in Eire, but described him as an 'opportunist.' Farrell (1980: 352) describes Clann na Poblachta as

a populist Republican party... Founded in 1946... it included many ex-IRA men and took substantial support from Fianna Fail while its radical social programme attracted left-wingers.

- (11) It is worth noting that another anthropologist has reached similar conclusions in relation to a Ugandan railway union. Grillo (1973) argues, against the conventional wisdom, that the endemic faction fighting in this union was generated by the structure of the situation. not by ethnic rivalry. He concludes (1973: 175):

In sum, to suggest that faction fighting is caused basically by ethnic rivalry overlooks the extent to which the latter is the product of the former, and that both, in turn, are virtually inevitable in this system so long as the Union itself remains a desirable prize.

CHAPTER 7: RIVALRY AND ACCOMMODATION: TRADE UNIONISM IN THE DERRY SHIRT INDUSTRY 1954-1968

- (1) Each of these committees were composed of lay activists who were elected by the members. O'Connor held the one seat on the National Executive which was allocated to Ireland.
- (2) Mr Lynch was the son of the Mr Lynch who was killed in the same incident as McCarron (see section 3.2).
- (3) Aside from the Branch Committee elected in 1953, this is the only year in which Committee members were listed (see DJ: 15 March 1957).
- (4) Ollis was given sick leave and never returned to Derry. He was removed from the job because he could not cope with the stress

of working in Derry. According to Macgougan, Ollis was,

A tragedy, he went to Derry while the split was on and he had a lonely time... [He] was very highly thought of by the members, I liked him... but he stayed in awful digs apparently. He was watched like a hawk [by the ITGWU] if he'd been seen out with a woman or anything like that.

There is some corroboration for what Macgougan says in the minutes of the Derry Branch of the NUTGW. In 1957 NUTGW shop stewards complained about Ollis's failure to deal with a few industrial relations problems; Miss Gallagher is reported to have saved him from a vote of no confidence by arguing that the complaints were minor and that they only 'assisted the opposition in their whispering campaigns of which we were all too familiar' (Minute: 29 November 1957). Both Macgougan and Gallagher made several references to ITGWU inspired whispering campaigns against them and their union in the early 1950s. In the last chapter I noted Miss Gallagher's claim that insinuations were made about her and O'Connor. Macgougan also told me, spontaneously and without me having mentioned Miss Gallagher's claim, that O'Connor 'saw' a 'couple' of women while he was in Derry; he added that Derry was not the sort of place where that would pass unnoticed, and suggested that the resulting gossip made O'Connor's position in Derry even more difficult.

- (5) Mary was putting rollers in the hair of Mrs McMenamin, an ITGWU activist whom I had arranged to interview. Part of this interview is tape-recorded, but Mary's comments are not: my tape-recorder malfunctioned for the first half of the interview, and Mary had finished Mrs McMenamin's hair and left the house before I discovered the malfunction. However, I recalled most of what Mary had said and made notes immediately after the interview was over.
- (6) The reader may recall that Selly McDowell, a founder member of the new NUTGW Branch Committee, worked in Rosemount. Miss Gallagher told me that Miss McDowell
was great because she worked with us when we really needed her... because I went to all the conferences with her. She was always with me and I liked going

with her; well she was something the same as myself... she enjoyed herself in her own way, we enjoyed ourselves.

However, she was not able to make much progress in the Rosemount factory, and in 1955 she stopped attending NUTGW Branch Committee meetings. Miss Gallagher did not know why, but suspected that she had been subject to moral pressure by ITGWU members:

I don't know what happened [to] her after that... I know something happened in the Rosemount, and I got the shock of my life: somebody told me Selene had gone over to McGonagle. And it was true enough because I met her afterwards... they [the ITGWU] were in trouble and she was the odd man out and they said to her she would have to [join the ITGWU]. And, of course some of Stephen's people must have been in the background of that. And I wouldn't have believed it so I came across and was having a talk with her and she said, 'Kathy, I had to, I had to do it.' But then as far as I know - she met me after - 'to tell you the truth, at the moment I'm not in any [union].'

The NUTGW was never able to function effectively in the Rosemount factory.

- (7) It was not just Unionists like Mrs Henderson who were suspicious of McGonagle. John Sharkey, another left-wing anti-partitionist in Derry, referred to McGonagle as 'the noted McGonagle who made himself so popular by being all things to all men.' (letter to John DeCourcy Ireland dated 1 October 1962, University College Dublin: P29a/158 (2)).
- (8) The ATGWU remained the main union for shirt cutters, and its proportionate share of the shirt workforce did not change significantly between 1954 and 1968.
- (9) In the early 1970s the Belfast office of the ITGWU became concerned about its declining membership in Derry and commissioned an independent report on the subject. The Belfast official of the ITGWU who commissioned the report refused to let me see it. Quinn claimed that the ITGWU had 3,000 members in the late 1960s, but by my reckoning this is an overestimate.

- (10) I met Sadie by accident. I had arranged to interview a retired Protestant shirt factory worker called Lily; when I got to her house I found that she had invited two other shirt workers to take part in the interview, one of these women was Sadie. I went ahead with the interview and tape-recorded it; however, I found that each of the women was less forthcoming about the political aspects of trade unionism than they might have been had I met them individually (cf Thompson, 1978: 116). Of the three, Sadie was the most outspoken and the remark quoted in the text was about the only thing which any of the women had to say on the division between the NUTGW and the ITGWU. It was not possible to arrange a further interview with Sadie or either of the other two.
- (11) It is worth pointing out that when talking about the NUTGW people she met, Miss McMorris does not include Miss Gallagher among those she liked and respected; neither woman was able to forget the 'aggro' in Harrison's factory. The NUTGW official whom she liked best was Francis Maguire, and it is perhaps significant that relations between Francis Maguire and Miss Gallagher were often strained: Miss Gallagher regarded her as one of the 'Eire Labour [ie IrLP] crowd.'
- (12) Even with Peggy, Miss Gallagher's attitude was coloured by political disagreement: she qualified the statement quoted in the text by saying, 'but, there again her [Peggy's] politics were very Irish.'
- (13) My respondent was Margaret: the Catholic woman from the Bogside who I mentioned in section 4.3 as the only example of a 'female breadwinner' I came across in the course of my research. It is worth pointing out that when I interviewed her she was a prominent NUTGW shop steward in Harrison's.

CHAPTER 8: TRADE UNIONISM AND SECTARIANISM IN THE DERRY SHIRT
INDUSTRY 1920-1968: AN HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL
CONCLUSION

- (1) Miss Cosgrave, the other ITGWU activist in my sample, gave up her union membership when she became a manageress in the Rosemount factory in the early 1960s (see Appendix 1).
- (2) This quote is taken from the transcript of a tape-recording of Hamill's paper. All of the contributions at the 1985 Irish Labour History Society Conference were tape-recorded.
- (3) Purdie speculates (1987: 11) that the bulk of support for McGonagle came from nationalists who had not forgiven McAteer for usurping the Nationalist Party nomination in the Foyle constituency from Paddy Maxwell in 1953 (see Curran, 1986: 13).
- (4) O'Dowd (1980b: 64) has also remarked, albeit in a different context, on the distance of Catholic politics from the workplace and production based issues:

the Catholic working class have remained marginal to industrial production. The foregoing analysis of 'regional policy' has shown that there are clear and unequivocal reasons why Catholic protest is not based at the workplace and why the central political and military struggle appears so remote from production-based issues. Restructuring has maintained - if not extended - the marginality of Catholics; the largest concentration of urban Catholic males are not on the shop-floor but on the dole queue and in Long Kesh
- (5) It was alleged at the time that a number of local Unionist notables ostensibly subscribed to the University for Derry Campaign but in practice supported government policy. They became known as the 'faceless men' (Curran, 1986: 27).
- (6) Mrs Henderson's recollections of the 5 October march are at variance with contemporaneous accounts written by other participants (see Purdie, 1988 for a summary). According to the latter it was the police who attacked first, and although some of the marchers threw placards at the police there is no

mention of stones being thrown until sometime after the march had dispersed. The CRM was not a republican plot, and the IRA did not re-emerge as an armed force until late in 1970 (see Bell, 1979: chapter 19 passim, and Curran, 1986: 123). However, it is true that republicans were involved in the formation of NICRA, and in the agitation in Derry which preceded the 5 October march. It is also true that as inter-communal violence intensified many civil rights activists gravitated towards physical force republicanism. McCann (1980: 129) writes that the Provisional IRA:

is entitled to see itself... as the legitimate inheritor of the struggle for civil rights... The men and women of the IRA today are the rioting children of a decade ago. To my knowledge there is no member of the Provos in Derry whose first conscious political experience was other than attendance at a civil rights march or rally and, probably, whatever bout of stone throwing ensued.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that Mr Gordon, Unionist shirt cutter and member of the ATGWU, echoed Mrs Henderson's views:

The day that the civil rights got on the street was the best thing that happened from the point of view of the working man... the only thing was the the IRA came behind them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(This bibliography includes only the published and unpublished written sources to which reference has been made in the text)

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

(A) MANUSCRIPT MATERIALS

- 1. The Archives Department University College Dublin, Belfield.**
Dr John DeCourcy Ireland Deposit, P29a/158.
- 2. Head Office of the NUTGW, London**
Quarterly Membership Report (1970).
- 3. The Londonderry Office of the ATGWU**
Minutes of the Cutters' Committee of the ATGWU (1950-1952).
- 4. Londonderry Office Office of the NUTGW**
Minutes of the Londonderry (Female Factory Workers) Branch of the
ASTT (1924-1932).
Minutes of the Londonderry Branch of the NUTGW (1933-1951).
Minutes of the Londonderry Branch of the NUTGW (1953-1962).
- 5. The Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)**
Minutes of the Board of Directors of Tillie and Henderson Ltd (1907-
1923) T. 3377/1.
- 6. The Registrar of Friendly Societies and Building Societies, Dublin**
The Londonderry Shirt, Collar, and Underclothing Cutters' Trade
Union, File: 255T.
The Shirt and Collar Cutters' Trade Union of Ireland, File: 114.

(B) PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

1. **Company Records, Companies Registration Office, London**

Harrison's and Co., Company Number: 434,328, and 404,116;

McCarthy's and Co., Company Number: 113,864.

McIntyre, Hogg, Marsh, and Co., Company Number: 97,241.

Young, Rochester, and Co., Company Number: 96,651.

2. **Government Reports and Documents:**

Boundary Commission Papers (1926) PRONI MIC 288.

Cameron Commission (1969) Disturbances in Northern Ireland, Cmd. 532,
Belfast: HMSO.

Census of Ireland 1901 Volume III Province of Ulster No 7 County
and City of Londonderry (1902) Dublin: HMSO.

Census of Ireland 1911 Province of Ulster County and City of
Londonderry (1912) London: HMSO.

Census of Northern Ireland 1926 County and County Borough of
Londonderry (1928) Belfast: HMSO.

Census of Population Northern Ireland 1951 County and County Borough
of Londonderry (1954) Belfast: HMSO.

Donovan Commission (1968) Report of the Royal Commission on Trade
Unions and Employers' Associations, Cmnd 3623, London: HMSO.

Northern Ireland Census of Population 1961 County and County Borough
of Londonderry (1964) Belfast: HMSO.

3. **Newspapers**

An Phoblacht/Republican News

The Derry Journal

The Derry Standard

The Irishman

The Irish Weekly

The Londonderry Sentinel

The News Sheet of the Belfast Executive of the Irish Labour Party

4. **Trade Union Publications**

Annual Reports of the British Trade Union Congress.

The Garment Worker (monthly journal of the UGW and, after 1933, of
the NUTGW).

Journal of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses
Liberty (monthly journal of ITGWU).
The Watchword of Labour (journal of the ITGWU 1919-1920).
Yearly Reports of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and
Tailoresses.

5. Typescript Documents

Conley, A. (24 June 1932) 'Circular to all Full-Time Officials:
Agreement Between the National Union of Tailors and Garment
Workers and the Transport and General Workers' Union' (copy
supplied by Belfast office of NUTGW).
Democratic Unionist Party (1978) 'Document of Discrimination', 3
October 1978 (press statement).
Macgougan, J. (12 September 1952) 'Statement to Irish Branches and
Shop Stewards' (copy supplied by author).
Macgougan, J. (24 September 1952) 'Summary of Statement by J.
Macgougan, Irish Officer National Union of Tailor and Garment
Workers, to a Meeting in the Guildhall Derry' (press statement,
copy supplied by author).
McCarthy and Co (1971) History of McCarthy and Company Limited (an
in-house history, photocopy)
Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Tailors
and Garment Workers, London: Head Office of the NUTGW.
National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (12 March 1948)
Membership Report (NI), Belfast: Office of the NUTGW.

6. Other Printed Material

Belfast and Northern Ireland Directory (1935-1971).

SECONDARY SOURCES

(A) PUBLISHED

(including books, articles, and pamphlets)

- Abrams, P. (1982) Historical Sociology, London: Open Books.
- Alexander, S. (1980) Review [of Lewenhak, S. (1978) Women and Trade Unions, Benn; and Soldon, N. C. (1978) Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976, Gill and Macmillan] Capital and Class, 11 Summer 1980.
- Althusser, L. (1969) For Marx, London: Allen Lane.
- Althusser, L. (1971) Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, London: New Left books.
- Arthur, P. (1987) Government and Politics of Northern Ireland, London: Longman.
- Barritt, D. P. and Carter, F. C. (1972) The Northern Ireland Problem: A Study in Group Relations, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barron, R. D. and Norris, E. R. (1976) 'Sexual Divisions and the Dual Labour Market' in Barker, D. L. and Allen, S. (eds) Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage, London: Longman.
- Beckett, J. C. (1966) The Making of Modern Ireland, London: Faber and Faber.
- Beechey, V. (1983) 'What's so Special About Women's Employment? A Review of Some Recent Studies of Women's Paid Work', Feminist Review 15.
- Bell, J. Bowyer. (1979) The Secret Army: The IRA 1916-1979, Dublin: Academy Press.
- Benney, M. and Hughes, E. C. (1956) 'Of Sociology and the Interview' in Bulmer, M. (ed) Sociological Research Methods: An Introduction, London: Macmillan 1983.
- Bew, P., Gibbon, P., and Patterson, H. (1979) The State in Northern Ireland 1921-1972, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bew, P., Gibbon, P., and Patterson, H. (1980) 'Some Aspects of Nationalism and Socialism in Ireland 1968-1978' in Morgan, A. and Purdie, B. Ireland: Divided Nation Divided Class, London: Ink Links.

- Bleakley, D. W. (1953) 'The Northern Ireland Trade Union Movement', Journal of the Statistical and Social Enquiry Society of Ireland, 20.
- Boraston, I., Clegg, H. A., and Rimmer, M. (1975) Workplace and Union: A Study of Local Relationships in Fourteen Unions, London: Heinemann.
- Bornat, J. (1977) 'Home and Work: A New Context for Trade Union History', Journal of the Oral History Society 5 (2).
- Bourdieu, P. (1978) Outline of a Theory of Practice, Translated by Nice, R., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (First edition 1972).
- Boyd, A. (1972) The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions 1729-1970, Tralee.
- Boyd, A. (1984) Have the Trade Unions Failed the North, Mercier Press, Dublin and Cork.
- The British and Irish Communist Organisation, (1972) The Economics of Partition, Belfast.
- Buckland, P. S. (1973) Irish Unionism, Dublin.
- Burton, F. (1978) The Politics of Legitimacy: Struggles in a Belfast Community, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Charles, N. (1983) 'Women and Trade Unions in the Workplace', Feminist Review 15.
- Clegg, H. A. (1976) Trade Unionism Under Collective Bargaining: A Theory Based on Comparisons of Six Countries, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Clegg, H. A. (1979) The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cockburn, C. (1983) Brothers, London: Pluto.
- Connolly, J. (1911) 'Sweat Shops Behind the Orange Flag' in Ryan, D. The Workers' Republic, Dublin, 1951.
- Cork Workers' Club (1975) 'North East Ulster', in Ireland on the Dissecting Table: Connolly on Ulster, Cork.
- Cormack, R. J., Osborne, R. D., and Thompson, W. T. (1980) Into Work? Young School Leavers and the Structure of Opportunity in Belfast, Belfast: Fair Employment Agency (Research Paper 5).
- Coulter/Mews Music (N.D.) 'The Town I Loved So Well' in 100 Best Irish Songs and Ballads, Dublin: Mac Publications.
- Coyle, A. (1982) 'Sex and Skill in the Organisation of the Clothing Industry' in West, J. (ed) Work, Women and the Labour Market, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Curran, F. (1986) Derry: Countdown to Disaster, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
- Darby, J. (1983) Northern Ireland: The Background to the Conflict, Belfast: Appletree.
- Dempsey, P. (1983) 'Reversing Discrimination: The FEA's Derry Report', Iris: The Republican Magazine 6.
- Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (1902) 'The Londonderry Shirtmaking Industry' in Ireland Industrial and Agricultural, Dublin: Browne and Nolan.
- Devine, F. (1986) 'Trade Union Records in the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Dublin', Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society 11.
- Dohr, F. (1952) 'The Linen Industry of Northern Ireland', The Textile Quarterly 2 (2).
- Donnan, H. and McFarlane, G. (1983) 'Informal Social Organisation' in Darby, J. (ed) Northern Ireland: The Background to the Conflict, Belfast: Appletree Press.
- Dunlop, J. T. (1958) Industrial Relations Systems, New York: Holt.
- Eaton, J. and Gill, C. (1981) The Trade Union Directory: A Guide to All TUC Unions, London: Pluto.
- Elias, N. (1978) The Civilising Process, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fair Employment Agency (September 1983) Report on Employment Patterns in the Londonderry Area, Belfast.
- Farrell M. (1980) Northern Ireland: The Orange State, London: Pluto Press (first edition 1976).
- Finlay, A. (1987) 'The Cutting Edge: Derry Shirtmakers' in Curtin, C., Jackson, P., and O'Connor, B., Gender in Irish Society, University of Galway Press.
- Flanders, A. (1965) Industrial Relations: What is Wrong with the System?, London: Faber.
- Fraser, M. (1979) Children in Conflict, Middlesex: Penguin (First edition 1973).
- Fryer, G. (1973) Paeder O'Donnell, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Gallacher, W. (1936) Revolt on the Clyde, London.
- Gamble, A. (1987) 'Class Politics and Radical Democracy', New Left Review 167, July-August 1987.

- Gibbon, P. (1975) The Origins of Ulster Unionism, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1976) New Rules of the Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies, London: Hutchinson.
- Giddens, A. (1979) Central Problems in Social theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1977) in Hoare, Q. Gramsci: Selections from the Political Writings 1910-120, London: Lawrence Wishart.
- Gray, J. (1984) City in Revolt: James Larkin and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907, Belfast: Blackstaff.
- Greaves, C. D. (1982) The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union: The Formative Years 1909-1923, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
- Grillo, R. (1973) African Railwaymen: Solidarity and Opposition in an East African Labour Force, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guckian, F. G. (1963) A Great Industry in Peril: The Problem of the Shirt and Pyjama Industry In Northern Ireland in 1963, Londonderry.
- Hall, S. (1988) 'Brave New World', Marxism Today, October 1988.
- Harris, R. (1972) Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster: A Study of Neighbours and 'Strangers' in a Border Community, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Harris, R. (1987) Power and Powerlessness In Industry An Analysis of the Social Relations of Production, London: Tavistock Publications.
- Hemmingway, J. (1978) Conflict and Democracy: Studies in Trade Union Government, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoare, Q. (1986) Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, London: Lawrence Wishart.
- Hyman, R. (1975) Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, London: Pluto Press (first edition 1971).
- Hyman, R. (1979a) Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction, London: Macmillan (first published in 1975).
- Hyman, R. (1979b) 'The Politics of Workplace Trade Unionism: Recent Tendencies and Some Problems for Theory', Capital and Class 8, Summer 1979.

- Hyman, R. and Fryer, B. (1975) 'Trade Unions', in McKinley, J. (ed) Processing People, London: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston.
- Jackson, H. (1979) The Two Irelands: The Problem of the Double Minority - A Dual Study of Inter-Group Tensions, London: Minority Rights Group (first edition 1971).
- James, L. (1984) Power in a Trade Union: The Role of the District Committee in the AUEW, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, R. (1983) Lads, Citizen's, and Ordinary Kids: Working Class Youth Life Styles in Belfast, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Kapferer, B. (1988) 'The Anthropologist as Hero: Three Exponents of Post-Modernist Anthropology', Critique of Anthropology VIII (2).
- Kendal, W. (1975) The Labour Movement in Europe, London: Allen Lane.
- Kettle, M. (1979) 'A Tale of Two Cities: the People of Divided Derry', New Society 49 (8), 12 July 1980.
- Laclau, E. (1985) 'New Social Movements and the Plurality of the Social', in Slater, D. (ed), New Social Movements and the State in Latin America, Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Lande, H. (1978) 'Who Cares For the Family?', Journal of Social Policy, 7 (3).
- Leadbeater, C. (1988) 'Power to the Person', Marxism Today, October 1988.
- Lenin, V. I. (1978) What is to be Done? Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- Lenin, V. I. (1964) The Development of Capitalism in Russia in The Collected Works, vol. 3, Moscow.
- Lerner, S. (1961) Breakaway Unions and the Small Trade Union, London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Lewenhak, S. (1978) Women and Trade Unions, London: Benn
- Londonderry Teachers' Centre and North West Historical Society (N.D. c1979) The Shirt Industry of the North-West of Ireland, Londonderry.
- Lyons, F. S. L. (1973, revised edition) Ireland Since the Famine, London: Fontana.
- Macgougan, J. (1948) The Londonderry Air, Belfast, Socialist Forum (reprinted from Town and Country Planning, Autumn 1948).
- Mackie, L. and Patullo, P. (1977) Women at Work, London, Tavistock.
- Manpower Working Party of the Clothing EDC (1972) Wage Payment Systems in the Clothing Industry, London: National Economic Development Office.

- Marx, K. (1959) Economic and Philisophical Manuscripts of 1844, London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Marx, K. (1977) Capital (3 Volumes), London, Lawrence and Wishart.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1977) The Manifesto of the Communist Party, Peking: Foreign Languages Press.
- McCann, E. (1974) War and an Irish Town, London: Penguin.
- McCann, E. (1980) War and an Irish Town (new updated edition), London: Pluto.
- McCarthy, C. (1973) The Decade Upheaval: Irish Trade Unions in the 1960s, Institute of Public Administration: Dublin.
- McCarthy, C. (1977) Trade Unions In Ireland 1894-1960, Institute of Public Administration, Dublin.
- McGonagle, S. (1951) 'Work Study, Productivity and Wages', Christus Rex (2) 2 (reprinted in Liberty February 1954).
- Messenger B. (1981) Picking Up the Linen Threads: The Folklore of the Irish Linen Industry, Belfast: Blackstaff Press.
- Michels, M. (1958) Political Parties, New York: Free Press.
- Moody T. W. (1954) 'A General Survey' in T. W. Moody and J. C. Beckett (eds), Ulster Since 1800: A Political and Economic Survey, London.
- Morgan, A. and Purdie, B. (1980) Ireland: Divided Nation Divided Class, London: Ink Links.
- Morrissey, M. and Morrissey, S. (1979) 'Northern Ireland: Why the Trade Unions are Central', Marxism Today, November 1979.
- Mortished, R. J. P. (1927) 'Trade Union Organisation in Ireland', Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, Part C1, Volume XV (Continued), October 1927.
- Munck, R. (1986) 'The Formation of the Working Class in Belfast, 1788-1881' Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society 11.
- Munck, R. and Rolston, B. (1987) Belfast in the Thirties: An Oral History, Belfast: Blackstaff Press.
- Murphy, D. (1981) Derry, Donegal and Modern Ulster 1790-1920, Londonderry: Aileach.
- Nelson, S. (1984) Ulster's Uncertain Defenders: Loyalists and the Northern Ireland Conflict, Belfast: Appletree Press.
- The North of Ireland (Illustrated) Up-to-Date Londonderry (N. D. c1900), London: Robinson & Co.

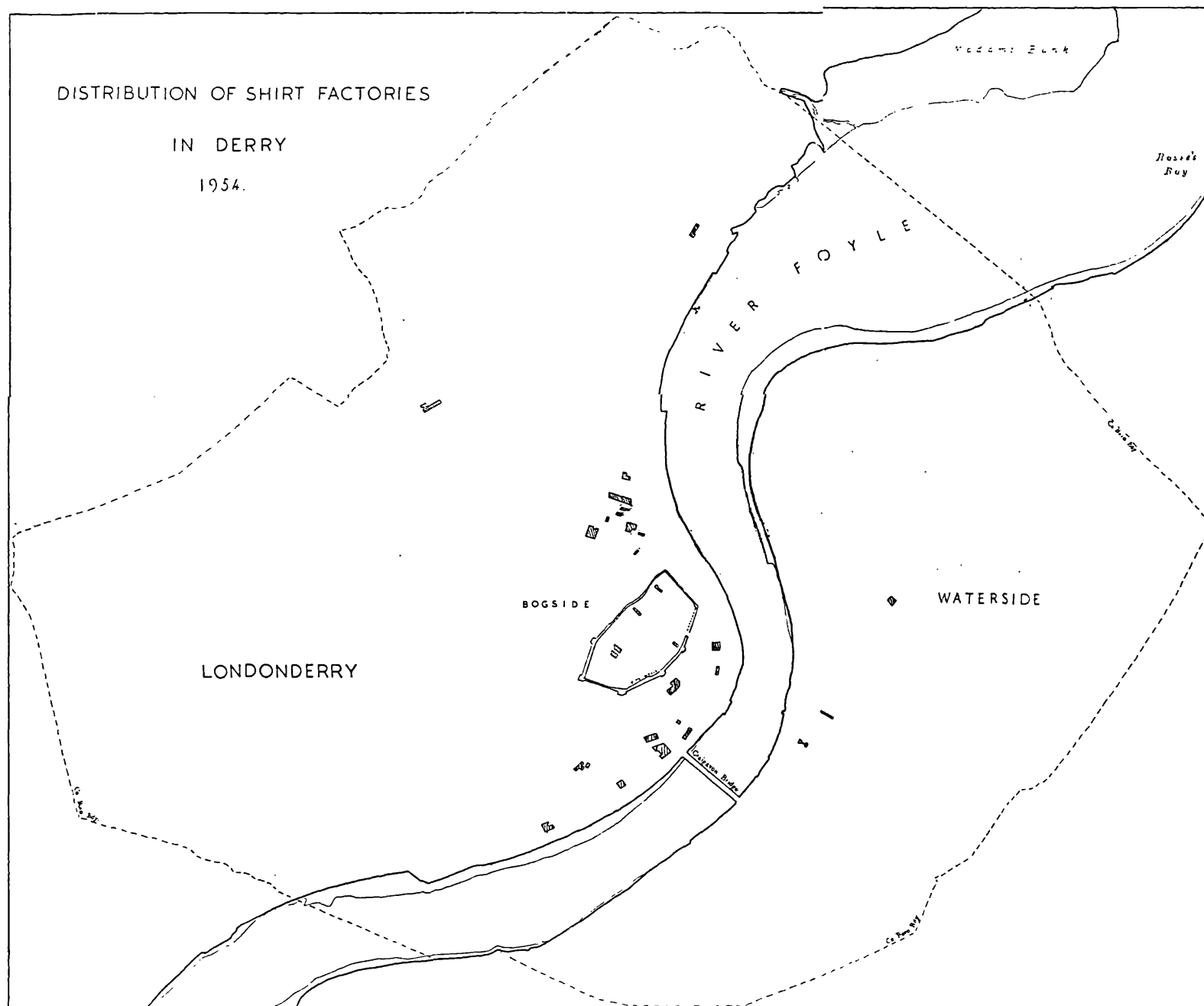
- Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (1979) We Shall Overcome: The History of the Struggle for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland 1968-78, Belfast: NICRA.
- North Tyneside Community Development Project (1978) North Shields: Women's Work, Final Report vol5, Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
- O'Brien, C. C. (1974) States of Ireland, London: Panther.
- O'Dowd, L. (1980a) 'Shaping and Reshaping the Orange State: An Introductory Analysis' in O'Dowd et al Northern Ireland: Between Civil Rights and Civil War, London: CSE Books.
- O'Dowd, L. (1980b) 'Regional Policy' in O'Dowd et al Northern Ireland: Between Civil Rights and Civil War, London: CSE Books.
- O'Dowd, L. (1987) 'Church, State and Women: The Aftermath of Partition' in Curtin, C., Jackson, P., and O'Connor, B. (eds) Gender in Irish Society, Galway University Press.
- O'Dowd, L., Rolston, R., and Tomlinson, M. (1980) Northern Ireland: Between Civil Rights and Civil War, London: CSE Books.
- Ortner, S. B. (1984) 'Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties', Comparative Studies in History and Society 26 (1).
- Patterson, H. (1980) Class Conflict and Sectarianism: The Protestant Working Class and the Belfast Labour Movement 1868-1920 Belfast: Blackstaff Press.
- Patterson, H. (1982) 'Paisley and Protestant Politics', Marxism Today January 1982.
- Patterson, H. (1984) 'Industrial Labour and the Labour Movement, 1820-1911' in Kennedy, L. and Ollerenshaw, P. (eds) An Economic History of Ulster 1870-1914, Manchester.
- Pollert, A. (1981) Girls, Wives, Factory Lives, London: Macmillan.
- Poole, M. (1984) Theories of Trade Unionism: A Sociology of Industrial Relations, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Popular Memory Group (1982) 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method.' in Johnson, R., McLennan, G., Schwarz, B., and Sutton, D. Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics, London: Hutchinson.
- Purdie, B. (1988) 'Derry: The Walls Came Tumbling Down', Fortnight 266, October 1988.

- Reid A. (1980) 'Skilled Workers in the Shipbuilding Industry 1880-1920: a Labour Aristocracy?' in Morgan, A. and Purdie, B. Ireland: Divided Nation Divided Class, London: Ink links.
- Robertson, N. and Sams, K. I. (1976) 'The Role of the Full-Time Union Officer', Economic and Social Review, 8 (1).
- Rolston, B. (1980) 'The Limits of Trade Unionism' in O'Dowd, L., Rolston, B., and Tomlinson, B. Northern Ireland Between Civil Rights and Civil War, London: CSE Books.
- Rolston, B. (1983) 'Reformism and Sectarianism: The State of the Union after Civil Rights' in Darby, J. (ed) Northern Ireland the Background to the Conflict, Belfast: Appletree Press.
- Scott, S. (1928) William Scott: Founder of the Londonderry Shirt Trade, Derry.
- Stewart, M. and Hunter, L. (1964) The Needle is Threaded, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Thompson, E. P. (1979) The Making of the English Working Class, Middlesex: Penguin (first edition 1963).
- Thompson, P. (1978) The Voice of the Past: Oral History Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Turner, H. A. (1962) Trade Union Growth, Structure, and Policy: A Comparative Study of the Cotton Unions, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Watson, D. (1988) The Managers of Discontent: Trade Union Officers and Industrial Relations Managers, London: Routledge.
- Webb, S. and B. (1897) Industrial Democracy, London: Longmans.
- Webb, S. and B. (1902) The History of Trade Unionism, London: Longmans.
- Wood, E. M. (1986) The Retreat From Class, London: Verso.
- Workers' Research Unit (1979) 'Neglecting Civil Rights: Trade Unions and the "Troubles"', The Belfast Bulletin 7.

(B) UNPUBLISHED

- Deans, E. G. (1975) 'Life in Derry in the 1930's: Selected Aspects', Foundation Studies Dissertation, Institute of Continuing Education, New University of Ulster.

- Gledhill, J. (1988) 'Agrarian Social Movements and Forms of Consciousness', University College London.
- Grew, J. A. (1987) 'The Derry Shirt Making Industry 1831-1913', M.Phil. thesis, University of Ulster.
- Hall, R. (1979) 'Capitalist Development on the Periphery: The Case of Dungannon', Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Ulster Polytechnic (photocopy).
- Hamill, G. (1985) 'Labour Politics in Derry', paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Irish Labour History Society, Derry 13-15 September 1985.
- Hamilton, I. R. W. (1955) 'The Shirt Industry of Derry, Being a Study in Economic Geography', Undergraduate 'Honours' Dissertation, Queen's University of Belfast.
- McLaughlin, E. (1985) 'In Search of the Female Breadwinner', paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Irish Labour History Society, Derry 13-15 September 1985.
- McLenaghan, P. (1985) 'Labour and Nationalism In the North West', paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Irish labour History Society, Derry, 13-15 September 1985.
- Morgan, A. (1978) 'Politics, the Labour Movement and the Working Class in Belfast, 1905-1923', Ph.D. thesis, The Queen's University of Belfast.
- Nash, J. (1974) 'The AUEW (Eng. Section): An Analysis of its Historical Development and Present Functioning in Derry', Foundation Studies Dissertation, New University of Ulster.
- Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (N. D. c1972) 'A Survey of Facts, Figures, and Opinion Relating to the Economic Situation in Londonderry', Belfast.
- Purdie, B. (1987) 'Derry and its Action Committees' (photocopy).
Final draft of chapter 6 of Purdie, B. (1989) 'The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement', Ph.D. thesis, University of Strathclyde.
- Robinson, A. (1967) 'A Social Geography of the City of Londonderry', M.A. thesis, New University of Ulster.
- Slade, E. H. (1937) 'A History of the Londonderry Shirt Factory', M.A. thesis, The Queens University of Belfast.



Source: Adapted From Hamilton (1955: Map 4).